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WORLD OF SPORT
World Cup
minnows come
under fire
It's ALL in the
WORLD OF SPORT
TODAY

**Election
day
lottery
continues**
Peres names
campaign team

LIAT COLLINS

THE election day lottery continued yesterday with several suggested dates coming up in the Knesset, but the final announcement by Prime Minister Shimon Peres expected at the Labor faction meeting was not to be.

The most favored date appears to be May 20, although Peres said he still prefers May 14. The Likud and religious parties would be happier with either May 28 or June 4.

"In my opinion, the shorter the pre-election period - the better," Peres said. "Fewer days means less expenditure and more benefits for the state and democracy."

Peres said he would go with the May 20 date if the religious parties preferred. "Ninety days is enough to say everything that needs to be said and even what doesn't need to be said."

The morning meeting between Labor and Likud-Tsomet on the election date ended with a screaming match, after which Labor faction chairman Ra'anan Cohen stormed out to yell waiting reporters: "It's all blown up. The Likud is just using gimmicks and making a show of everything."

MK Michael Eitan (Likud) passed his own judgment: "If only they'd been this tough in the negotiations with the PLO, it would have been better for the country."

The religious parties in the morning insisted on the June 4, but by afternoon some religious MKs said they would be willing to compromise on May 20.

Peres denied that May 14, three days before Jerusalem Day, was an attempt at preventing the Likud-Tsomet from conducting a massive publicity campaign on a sensitive day.

"I'm not impressed by empty rhetoric," he said, listing a large number of Laborites involved in the reunification of Jerusalem from Levy Eshkol to Yitzhak Rabin and Teddy Kolek. "Not exactly a Likud team."

Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu joked in his faction meeting: "We could hold the elections tomorrow. I don't think they'd have time to come down off the Golan Heights and redivide Jerusalem by then. Or create a Palestinian state."

(Continued on Page 2)

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Rescue workers examine the wreckage of the school bus yesterday.

(Courtesy of Yediot Aharanot)

Three children killed, 36 injured as truck slams into school bus

BATSHEVA TSUR

THREE children were killed and 36 injured when a tractor trailer jackknifed into a bus carrying pupils to the regional elementary school at Kibbutz Lavi in the Galilee yesterday morning.

Two children were reported in serious condition with head wounds and were in intensive care at Haifa's Rambam Hospital last night. The bus driver was also moderately injured.

Those killed were Perah Moyal, 8, of Yavneel; Eilon Tuito, 9, of Kfar Oved; and Linor Hajbi, 7, also of Kfar Oved. They were buried yesterday afternoon.

The driver of the tractor trailer was identified as a 25-year-old resident of a Galilee village who had already committed 17 serious traffic offenses, Israel Radio reported last night. In the past two years, he was reportedly fined twice for speeding.

The accident occurred shortly after 7 a.m. when the trailer apparently swerved away from the truck pulling it, slicing into the side of the oncoming bus, a police spokesman said. He said police were investigating whether the accident, which occurred as the bus was approaching the Golani junction, was the result of human error or a technical fault.

A passing bus collected those children who were conscious and took them to Poriya Hospital in Tiberias, eyewitnesses said. The remaining victims waited for ambulances to be dispatched.

Two of the children were killed

instantly and a third died on arrival at Poriya Hospital, a hospital spokesman said. By nightfall, 30 lightly injured children were discharged. Three who were seriously injured were transferred by helicopter to Rambam Hospital, and the remainder were reported in moderate to fair condition at Poriya.

"I was sitting at the back of the bus and talking with a friend when there was a tremendous bang and the bus lurched back," Adi Mamo, 8, told Educational TV. "We couldn't even talk. We climbed out through the windows and I started looking for my sister," who was injured in the legs.

"Then I saw the back of my friend Perah, on the ground outside. This upset me terribly. I also saw the head of a boy. I felt horrible. I was very worried about Perah and about Avi Cohen, whom I saw was injured."

"After the bang, it was very quiet and then everyone went wild trying to get out," said Shiran Cohen, the sister of Avi, 12, who is one of those in serious condition. "There was blood everywhere, and bits of broken glass. I started asking where Avi was, and someone told me he was okay. Later they said he had hurt his head."

At the school, third-grader Avital Ronen told her teacher: "I can't sit alone." Avital had shared a desk with Perah. "I wrote a letter to Perah's family. I told them I

want her to come back, but I know she can't. I feel so sad," Avital said later in an interview on Educational TV.

Since the beginning of this year, 65 people have been killed on the roads.

Education Minister Amnon Rubinstein, who attended the funerals and visited the injured, ordered educational psychologists to be sent immediately to the school where the children studied.

Classes were canceled and the children were given activities aimed at allowing them to express their fears. Psychologists were also sent to the homes of those killed and injured.

Rubinstein also ordered an investigation into the safety precautions taken by school buses in rural areas. He appealed to employers of professional drivers, particularly those driving heavy vehicles, to make sure they are fit to drive. "Road accidents are claiming more and more lives," Rubinstein said later.

Liav Collins adds: Knesset Speaker Shevah Weiss opened yesterday's plenum session by expressing his condolences to the families and hopes for the speedy recovery of the victims.

Education Committee Chairwoman Dalia Itzik (Labor) said she felt the words are worthless. "This House has done nothing to deal with this problem and this government - my government -

has not done enough on this subject, even though it has done much to improve the roads."

Transport Minister Yisrael Kessar blamed the legislators, saying the Knesset was not helping his ministry by opposing legislation regarding truck drivers and transport despite the high percentage of accidents involving trucks.

Foreign leaders may be asked to stay away till after elections

DAVID MAKOVSKY

THE Foreign Ministry is weighing whether to ask foreign dignitaries to delay their trips here until after the elections to avoid a diplomatic confrontation over visits to Orient House. Foreign Ministry officials indicated yesterday.

It is possible that even in the absence of an explicit Foreign Ministry appeal, foreign officials would decide not to visit during the election campaign, should Internal Security Minister Moshe Shahal ban visits to Orient House.

The cancellations, should they occur, would mark the first diplomatic casualty of the partisan debate, following the Likud's allegation earlier this week that Prime Minister Shimon Peres would partition Jerusalem if elected. Peres has termed the charge "incitement" and "character assassination."

After the Likud allegation, Shahal sent a letter to Foreign Minister Ehud Barak urging him to cooperate in ensuring that visiting foreign ministers do not stop at Orient House. His aides said the move was needed so Orient House would not become a Palestinian Authority mini-foreign ministry. Likud Leader Benjamin Netanyahu, addressing his Knesset faction, greeted the announcement with: "Good morning Shahal! Now you've woken up?"

He said the Likud has been demanding for three years that the government close Orient House, only to be told it is a "cultural center."

He called on the coalition to prove it is serious about the ban by voting in favor of the bill by Knesset Interior Committee chairman Yehoshua Matza demanding the closure of Orient House.

MK Naomi Chazan (Meretz) described Shahal's announcement as "throwing out the baby, the peace process, with the bathwater, the Likud's propaganda. It is clear to all that the meaning of 'permanent [status] talks' is that Jerusalem's future will come up for discussion."

She called on the government to restrain Shahal, "who is turning the future of Jerusalem into his own primary election campaign subject."

Chazan said the Foreign Ministry has expressed its opposition to the meetings, but Shahal's decision to physically stop them "will cause tremendous international harm to Jerusalem's status."

Barak asked Peres to hold consultations on the issue between the two of them and Shahal, Foreign Ministry officials said.

"We are waiting for the consultations of the three now," a senior ministry official said. "If they decide to follow Shahal and prevent foreign ministers from visiting Orient House, there were those at (Continued on Page 2)

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Peres: Likud committing character assassination

SARAH HONIG

PRIME Minister Shimon Peres complained yesterday that the Likud is employing character assassination against him by raising the issue of Jerusalem.

"The Likud launched its election campaign in an ugly fashion," Peres said. "They are committing character assassination, and not for the first time. This whole campaign, with the slogan of 'Peres will divide Jerusalem... is character assassination... it offends me. It hurts me. I am human, too.'"

Peres was speaking to the coalition's election team before it embarked on consultations with the opposition. He instructed the group to push for May 14 elections, and compromise on May 20 only if the religious parties would vote for it.

"There is no point in prolong-

ing this process and postponing elections for even one unnecessary day, considering that the Likud has already started its offensive," Peres said. "What's the point of dragging this campaign for four or five months? Our target is the earliest possible date. We won't quibble if the haredim will support May 20, but if they won't, it will be May 14."

But a big question mark surrounds the May 14 date. Danish Queen Margrethe is due to visit between May 12 and 14, following a state visit to Jordan and a few days of rest in Akaba. She is unlikely to reschedule.

Peres also announced that he is appointing Foreign Minister Ehud Barak to run his personal

campaign for prime minister. This was a consolation prize for Barak, who had sought to be put in charge of the Labor information drive. That job, however, went to Interior Minister Haim Ramon.

Barak was also told that should Peres be elected, he will retain the Defense portfolio. But Barak played the good loser, saying he felt "honored to be asked to manage the prime minister's campaign. I consider it a great compliment for someone as new to politics as myself."

He said he would be glad to (Continued on Page 2)

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First Israeli tour of Yemen sets off tomorrow

HAIM SHAPIRO

THE first Israeli tour to Yemen is due to leave tomorrow under the auspices of Neot Hakikar-Geographical Tours.

The group of about 20, all Israelis who also hold foreign passports, is to travel by land to Amman, where the company has been promised that the group will obtain Yemeni visas. From there, they are to fly by Royal Jordanian Airlines to Sanaa, the Yemeni capital.

The cost of the tour, which is to last nine days, is \$2,060. According to a standard disclaimer issued by the company, it undertakes to return the entire fee if the tour is canceled before it leaves Israel. If the group fails to obtain visas in Amman or is denied entry in Yemen, the company promises to refund the money, less expenses incurred to that point.

Peres dismisses charge he will redivide capital

LIAT COLLINS

PRIME Minister Shimon Peres yesterday dismissed the Likud-Tsomet electoral theme that he would redivide Jerusalem with one word: "chizbat," an old Palmah term for a myth or bluff.

Speaking at the weekly Labor Knesset faction meeting, he recalled Likud threats that Labor would give up the entire Golan Heights, and said that that has not happened and neither would Jerusalem be redivided.

Peres described the campaign as "character assassination" and "a deviation from both the truth and political norms."

He repeated that he knows of no negotiations on Jerusalem being carried out on the government's behalf. "No one carried out negotiations on redividing Jerusalem either on the government's behalf or mine, or with the government's knowledge or mine. Do you have any reason to think there is a word of truth in it? It's a completely unfounded lie," Peres said.

Binyamin Netanyahu, at the Likud faction meeting, countered: "Peres always denies everything. Everything's a chizbat. The Orient House is a chizbat, 11 PLO offices in Jerusalem are a chizbat, 200 men of Jibril Rajoub's [PA Protec-

tive Security] in Jerusalem is a chizbat. He just denies and denies everything. I give his statements as much credibility as I gave them when he denied sending the letter he sent on the existence of PLO institutions in Jerusalem, or when he denied having contacts with the PLO, when he had already agreed on the Oslo accord with them."

Netanyahu also accused Labor of labeling every statement by the opposition as seditious. "Pretty soon they'll tell us that if we say they'll leave the Golan Heights or the Jordan Valley, we're guilty of incitement. That's the real incitement, barring all legitimate criticism as incitement."

Likud campaign head Limor Livnat accused Labor of "panic-ing" and also attacked the media for unfair bias. She warned the party might take legal steps to ensure the guidelines on equal exposure on state television be enforced.

The Meretz Knesset faction, at its weekly meeting, accepted a proposal by faction leader Ran Cohen opposing "all building over the Green Line and a boycott of coalition meetings if Labor continues to support the construction of 6,300 housing units for haredim over the Green Line."



King Hussein accepts Id al-Fitr greetings from Internal Security Minister Moshe Shahal (center) and diplomat Moshe Sasson yesterday in Amman.

Israel, Jordan, PA near agreement on Allenby Bridge crossing

BILL HUTMAN AMMAN

ISRAEL, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority are near agreement on turning the Allenby Bridge into the major Jordan River crossing point. Internal Security Minister Moshe Shahal said after meeting here yesterday with King Hussein and Prime Minister Abdel Karim Kahariti.

Israeli diplomats said the agreement will pave the way for a multi-million dollar investment by the Japanese government in expanding the bridge, a narrow, one-lane structure that only takes light vehicles and is off-limits to most Israelis.

Shahal said that Foreign Ministry Director-General Uri Savir and PA Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry Ahmed Qreia (Abu Ala) "reached an understanding that will allow for the expansion of the Allenby Bridge." He said Hussein expressed his support for the

agreement.

The official reason for the visit was for Shahal to present Israel's good wishes to Jordan on the Id al-Fitr holiday which begins today. The royal helicopter was sent to the Allenby Bridge to pick up Shahal.

Shahal said peace talks with the Syrians were also discussed but he declined to give details, saying he first had to report to Prime Minister Shimon Peres. Shahal met with Kahariti for over an hour, and they were then joined by Hussein for another 30 minutes of talks.

The Israelis said the Allenby Bridge agreement, when finalized, was an important step towards improving commerce and tourism with Jordan, because of the bridge's proximity to central Israel and Amman.

When the expansion of the Allenby Bridge is complete, Israelis will no longer have to travel to the relatively remote crossing points near Eilat and Beit She'an, which are now the only places to enter Jordan.

Jordanian officials had given the green light for the agreement last week, when they informed Savir that Jordan would support expanding the bridge as long as the PA and Israel first reached an understanding on its operation, Israeli sources said.

Because of the Id al-Fitr holiday, the IDF has closed the Machpela Cave to Jewish worshippers. The closure began at 4 a.m. this morning, and will continue until 9 p.m. tomorrow.

40,000 multiple-party registrants reported

EVELYN GORDON

ALMOST 40,000 people have registered for more than one party, out of some 676,000 who enlisted for a party at all, registrar Ze'ev Boneh announced yesterday.

These figures are not complete, because some parties have not yet submitted their lists, and other lists could not be checked because of technical errors. However, Boneh decided to check now whatever he could in order to finish in time for the upcoming primaries.

By law, Boneh must notify anyone found on more than one list, and that person then has 10 days to decide to which party he really wants to be affiliated. If he does not choose, his name is removed from both lists.

Five parties did not submit their lists at all: Hadash; the Democratic Arab Party; Yemin Yisrael; a Russian immigrant party called Aliya (not to be confused with Natanael Shtrassky's new immigrant party); and Degel Hatorah. In addition, the Citizens Rights Move-

ment's entire list of 5,132 members was submitted in an uncheckable form, and some 6,600 names submitted by the other 10 parties also proved uncheckable for technical reasons.

Of the 716,753 names that could be checked, however, the registrar found that 38,323 had registered for two parties. Another 1,262 registered for three parties, and 13 people signed up for four parties.

By far the highest percentage of dual registries occurred in Tsomet and Yud. Thirty percent of Tsomet's 8,400 members double-registered, and 35 percent of Yud's 3,600 members did so.

The two major parties both came out relatively clean in percentage terms: Only 8 percent (22,237) of Labor's 277,000 members double-registered, and 12 percent (34,581) of the Likud's 290,000 members did so. Agudat Yisrael took the prize, however, with only 2 percent of its 164 members double-registered.

The Likud goaded Peres into a blunder

ANALYSIS

SARAH HONIG

WHO won and who lost by winning through an earlier than anticipated date for the election? No one. The entire date-fixing episode may be a top contender for the title of most farcical much-ado-about-nothing in recent Israeli politics.

For weeks, even before the formal announcement of early elections was made, senior Labor politicians kept mentioning different dates. Each day, the smart money was on a different date, and what made perfect sense one day was dismissed on the next.

At one point, Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu agreed on May 28, then because of religious objections almost agreed again on June 4. But Labor refused to

yield in the hope that it would force the opposition into a package deal involving a change in the rules just as the contest is to begin.

Labor wants legislation barring political advertising from Channel 2, but allowing the electronic media to show candidates on news broadcasts right up to election day. The June 4 date was supposed to net the government a huge exposure advantage.

Falling to get the opposition to lay its collective head on the executioner's block, Labor craved June 4 from its calendar. It

stressed that it has the majority to get its way in the Knesset. So had previous governments, but the custom is to choose the date of election day by consensus.

Yet in this race, good will seems to be lacking even before the parties gather on the starting line. Labor is mad because the Likud kicked off its campaign by claiming that Peres is planning to redivide Jerusalem. Peres cried foul and charged the Likud is out to get him. Even if it weren't guilty of physical assassination, it was practicing character assassination. "It hurts. I am human

too," Peres noted. Meretz Knesset faction head Ran Cohen explained why all this mandates at the latest a May 20 election day, rather than the May 21, May 28, or June 4—all previously mentioned.

"Every day by which we shorten this campaign, we spare the nation disaster, because the Likud has decided to go to war which will injure people physically. Whoever wants to prevent a campaign with blood in the streets must move for elections as soon as possible," he said.

But the party line aside, it is hard to see what concrete benefit the coalition can derive from having the elections only several days before the date on which everyone could have amicably agreed. Labor's prospects will not be greater, nor the Likud's lesser. Labor's gain lies in having brought elections forward from autumn to spring, while the Rabin assassination is still fresher in the voters' minds. A few days one way or the other will not make the odds any more favorable.

But if the Likud managed to unsettle Labor with its opening shot, it bodes ill for the state of Labor's nerves and for the tone of the entire campaign. By overreacting, Labor managed to needlessly vex the religious community, which Peres needs in the separate prime ministerial race, and it made Labor appear an arrogant bully. For whatever it may or may not mean in the long run, the Likud easily goaded Peres into a blunder.

Basic Laws get first reading despite PM's plea

THREE new constitutional bills had their first reading in the Knesset last night at the insistence of Meretz, despite Prime Minister Shimon Peres's request to postpone discussion due to the religious parties' objections.

The new Basic Laws are: Legal Rights; Freedom of Expression and Association; and Social Rights. Religious MKs fear they would be used by the courts to overrule religious legislation.

Knesset Law Committee chairman Dedi Zucker (Meretz) postponed the vote, after religious MKs turned out in force to vote against, while coalition members were conspicuously absent.

Shahal's initiative has led some in Labor to wonder privately whether it legitimizes earlier Likud claims that Orient House should be closed.

Liav Collins contributed to this report.

SOCIAL & PERSONAL

ARRIVALS: Mrs. Haret Lahner, President, Women's League for Israel, Mrs. Dorothy Laffler, Executive Director, for the Presidents conference

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Palestinian policeman claims son held in Gaza without charges

JON IMMANUEL

THE father of a Palestinian policeman says his son has been held at an unknown location in Gaza for nine months without charges.

Khaled Wahabeh is one of about seven Palestinians held for a long period somewhere in Gaza, unable to see family or a lawyer. Some six others have been in jail for close to 14 months, Palestinian human rights groups say. They are suspected of being agents of arch-terrorist Abu Nidal, who planned attacks on the Palestinian Authority and Israel. Wahabeh is apparently suspected of collaborating with Israel.

He was released in November after being declared innocent, and told his brothers he had been interrogated about collaboration, severely tortured, and hospitalized during his imprisonment for broken bones in his legs and chest. He was rearrested two weeks later, and again disappeared.

Bassam Eid, the Palestinian human rights activist investigating the case, said that Amnesty International Director Pierre Sané, who visited the area recently, asked PA Chairman Yasser Arafat about Wahabeh's case. Arafat referred him to Khalil Zaaben, who heads the Palestinian Association of Human Rights, directly under PA control. Zaaben was unable to provide more information.

Eid has written directly to former US president Jimmy Carter requesting his direct intervention as "Palestinian human rights organizations continue to remain silent on these issues." Your intervention will have an effect on future actions of the PNA towards its citizens.

In a separate case, an Israeli human rights activist says a Palestinian released after three weeks in an Israeli jail in September 1992 has been catatonically ever since. Hassan Zbeidi was released in a "severe catatonic state," according to Dr. Ruhama Marton, the head of the association of Israeli-Palestinian physicians. Marton, who is treating him, claims Zbeidi was tortured by the General Security Service in jail and has sued the state. Five other prisoners held in the Tulkarm jail with Zbeidi at the time claimed they had been tortured.

Beduin woman killed as car overturns

A 25-year-old Beduin woman, Shaik Kura'an, of Hura in the Negev, was killed yesterday when her husband's car overturned on a road in the Yatir Forest, south of Hebron. Three other passengers in the car were slightly injured.

The car overturned after it first went off the road. Kura'an's husband succeeded in getting back on the road, but the car swerved left and fell into a three-meter deep ditch and overturned.

Attempts to revive Kura'an in a mobile intensive care unit on the way to Beersheba's Soroka Hospital failed.

The woman's husband had only received his driver's license a month ago. (Iim)

SLA soldier killed

A South Lebanon Army soldier was killed and three others lightly wounded when their patrol was attacked by mortar and Sagger missile fire. (Iim)

Cabbie stabbed, robbed

A cabbie from Petah Tikva was stabbed and robbed by three Palestinian passengers he was taking to Kalkiya yesterday. One of them held a knife to his throat, while another threatened him with a pistol. The cabbie was lightly injured in the ear when he resisted. (Iim)

The Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, the Director General, and ministry employees mourn the passing of

RONALD G. S. HANRECK

a former employee of the ministry, and extend condolences to his family

The staff and board of MELITZ mourn the passing of a devoted friend and supporter

RHODA GOLDMAN

of San Francisco and extend their condolences to Richard, John, Susan, Doug and their families.

Her contribution to the Jewish people, to Israel and to the ecology of the world has made it a better place for all of us. May the memory of her many good deeds serve as a solace.

Mordechai Bar-On Chairman of the Board Avraham Infeld President

The Israel Women's Network extends its sincerest condolences to

Richard Goldman on the sudden death of his wife

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a true friend and supporter of women in Israel

RUTH WOHLFARTH

née Blier

beloved wife of Uri (Hellmuth) mother and grandmother, passed away on February 18, 1996.

Shiva at 8, Rehov Habroshim, Nahlat Yehuda A, Rishon LeZion.

The Family

Medicallisa



Absorption Minister Yair Tzaban examines his ministry's new computerized guidelines yesterday. (Yitzhak Elharar)

Histadrut joins in unions' pension fight

MICHAEL YUDELMAN

BEZEQ, Israel Aircraft Industries and civilian workers of the IDF will disrupt work one day this week as part of the large labor unions' campaign against the Finance Ministry's new pension plan which significantly cuts the pension rights of most of the nation's salaried workers.

The unions, who are demanding the immediate cancellation of the pension settlement, have launched sanctions and organizational measures which may include a strike. Last week El Al, the Airport Authority and high school teachers stopped work for two hours.

The Histadrut yesterday joined the 11 large labor unions' fight over the settlement and included union representatives in the committee it set up to examine the agreement and re-negotiate its terms with the Treasury.

Histadrut Chairman MK Amir Peretz was convinced, after a meeting with union leaders, that

the pension settlement deprived workers of at least some of their pension rights.

The unions' committee includes the Israel Aircraft Industries, high school teachers, TAAS-Israel Industries, El Al, the Airport Authority, Bezeq, Oil Refineries, IDF civilian employees, the Weizman Institute, the technical engineers and technicians in the nuclear research center and Egged employees.

The unions' representatives yesterday took part in a stormy meeting of the Knesset sub-committee for pension affairs, headed by Ya'akov Yishai. MKs Yishai, Ra'anan Cohen, Yossi Elul and Avi Yehezkel all agreed with the unions' demands and blasted the Treasury for cutting down pension rights accumulated in decades of hard work.

"It is unthinkable that after 10,

or 15 or 20 years of work and saving, the government should come and say, excuse me, the product we promised and that you have paid for is not what you're going to get," said Shosh Oren, head of the high school teachers' union at the meeting.

The pension settlement was formulated by former Histadrut Chairman Haim Ramon and the Finance Ministry last year. However, the unions discovered that the Treasury then changed the original settlement, sharply damaging the workers' pension rights.

One change concerns the wages serving as a basis for the pension allocation. The Treasury decided that instead of the worker's last wage, the pension will be calculated on the average of the last three years' wages, which drastically reduces the pension basis. Other changes cut down the pension rights of new workers joining the pension funds.

'Authorities share blame for Druse woman's murder'

MARGOT DUDKEVITCH

OFFICIALS at the Defense for Children Rights' Center in Haifa yesterday charged that the authorities were partly to blame for the death of Nuseira Muadi, who was killed by her brother on Saturday night.

Police discovered the body of Muadi, 20, lying in an olive grove close to her home village of Yirka. Her skull smashed by a large rock. Her brother, Radwan, was found hanging from a tree a few hundred meters away.

On Saturday night, Radwan had gone to Safed College, where Nuseira was studying communications, and forced her to leave with him.

Center director Pamela Butter demanded that the authorities do more to prevent such senseless deaths.

"Nuseira wasn't killed because of family honor," said Butter, adding that her brothers had been angry with her for pressing charges against her abusive father. "Our police and all the authorities involved are not trained to do the job properly."

Muadi went to the center two months ago after being referred by a psychiatrist who had treated her and suggested she seek advice.

"She was a walking nightmare, who had been subjected to con-

tinual abuse throughout her childhood," said Butter. "She had been stabbed with scissors and knives, woken up in the middle of the night and beaten."

According to Butter, Muadi and her younger sisters were beaten not only by her father, but by her brothers and mother.

Muadi had been hospitalized several times with broken bones. "There was a conspiracy of silence in the village," said Butter. "Nuseira's main concern was for her two younger sisters, who lived at home."

Muadi insisted that her complaint concerning her father, Samir, be registered anonymously because she was frightened.

"The police ignored her request for anonymity and went to her Yirka home to question the sisters," said Butter. Ten days after the complaint was registered, her father was arrested.

Immediately afterwards, Muadi's brothers began pressing her to withdraw the charges, threatening to kill her if she refused. "Several times they forced her to accompany them and I would get frantic calls from her roommate telling me

Nuseira had been kidnapped," said Butter.

According to Butter, the brothers forced her to go to the police to withdraw the charges. When Muadi explained her plight, the police laughed at her.

After Samir Muadi was arrested, the center wrote letters to Labor and Social Affairs Minister Ora Namir, Justice Minister David Liba'i, and the different police officers who were handling the complaint, informing them of the situation and asking for their intervention.

"We were constantly told by the local social workers and Yirka regional council members to lay off the case and leave things alone," said Butter.

Labor and Social Affairs Ministry spokesman Zvi Timor said yesterday that as soon as Namir received the letter relating to Musara's plight, she took action.

"The following day, Namir contacted all the local welfare authorities, as well as the regional council heads, and demanded they intervene and do everything possible to help the woman."

Timor added that several times the authorities had offered Nuseira shelter or an adopted family, but she refused.

High Court declines to rule on prisoner releases

EVELYN GORDON

THE High Court of Justice yesterday considered the question of whether the state, under the Oslo accords, is obligated to free all Palestinian prisoners who meet certain criteria, but avoided a decision when the state said a prisoner who had petitioned against his no-release would "almost certainly" be freed in the next round of releases.

The petitioner, Majeed Halou, is serving 20 years for attempted murder. In his petition, he argued that he meets all the criteria set by the government, and therefore should have been freed. It is

unfair that he is still in prison when others guilty of more serious crimes - such as the actual murder of Arabs - have been freed, he argued.

Government attorney Yehuda Sheffer responded that the interim agreement signed this fall obligated the government to release a certain number of prisoners immediately, an additional group prior to the Palestinian Authority elections, and a third group at some unspecified later date -

probably not for several months.

There is no obligation to release all prisoners meeting certain criteria, he said. The government's only obligation to the PA is to release the appropriate number at the appropriate times, which it has, and its only obligation under Israeli law is not to release those who do not meet its criteria.

In the end, Justices Gavriel Bach, Yitzhak Zamir, and Ya'acov Kedmi rejected the petition without ruling explicitly on Halou's

claim, though Zamir suggested that the accords might create certain rights for Palestinian prisoners under Israeli law.

The ruling acknowledged the state's argument that the appropriate number of prisoners had been released, and that it had therefore fulfilled its international obligation. However, it also cited the state's promise that Halou will "almost certainly" be included in the next release as making the court's intervention unnecessary, leaving open the question of what would happen if the state refuses to free him.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Meshulam asks court for rehearing
Uzi Meshulam and his followers asked the Supreme Court yesterday to rehear their appeal before an expanded panel of justices. In its original verdict on the appeal, the court reduced Meshulam's sentence from eight years to 6 1/2, but the group wants a complete acquittal. While a split decision can often serve as a basis for a rehearing, it seems unlikely in this case, because the minority opinion was more stringent than the majority opinion. Evelyn Gordon

Vote today on road accidents bill
The Knesset Economics Committee will vote today on a bill aimed at combating road accidents, despite the Treasury's opposition, committee chairman Tzabi Hanegbi (Likud) said yesterday. The bill was submitted by an unprecedented 91 MKs last summer, but has been stalled by the Treasury's objection that it will cost too much. Evelyn Gordon

No more public thank-yous
Government ministries and other public bodies will no longer be able to spend public funds on congratulatory newspaper advertisements to public figures, according to a bill approved yesterday by the Knesset Law Committee for second and third reading. The bill, sponsored by Avraham Poraz (Meretz) and Michael Eitan (Likud), imposes a NIS 10,000 fine on violators. Evelyn Gordon

Justice to reply to comptroller's report
The justice minister will henceforth be responsible for replying to the State Comptroller's Report for the government, now that the Economics Ministry, which previously had this job, no longer exists, according to a bill approved yesterday by the Knesset State Control Committee. The bill will now be sent to the plenum for its first reading. Evelyn Gordon

Histadrut hires media expert to improve image
The Histadrut has hired media expert Yairiv Ben-Eliezer and public surveys adviser Kalman Gayer to launch a massive advertising campaign in September to improve its public image and attract new members.

The public is not aware of most of the Histadrut's activities and especially its activities for the workers, Histadrut leaders learned from public opinion polls.

The advertising campaign will consist of television broadcasts, radio jingles, printed ads, marketing and other things, based on the needs of the target population segments. Michal Yudelman

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Abeid guilty again

SULEIMAN Abeid, 46, was convicted of the rape/murder of Hanit Kikos for a second time by the Beersheba District Court yesterday. He was again sentenced to life in prison.

Abeid, of Rahat, was originally convicted on November 24, 1994, after confessing that he picked up the hitchhiking Kikos, 17, on June 10, 1993, in Ofakim, raping her on the way to Beersheba, killing her, and biding her body in the Dudaim dump, where he worked.

He later retracted his confession, claiming it had been coerced. His lawyer, Avigdor Feldman, appealed.

On June 11, 1995, a skeleton was found in a Beersheba

drainage ditch, and DNA testing proved that it was that of Kikos.

Since the remains were not found where Abeid had said he hid the body, the Supreme Court, on September 14, 1995, ordered that he be tried again.

The court again decided to convict him, by a 2-1 majority, with Judges Gilad Gladi and Zvi Segal voting to convict, and Judge Neal Hendel finding Abeid innocent. Feldman said he would again appeal.

Dozens of Beduin from Rahat and elsewhere in the Negev demonstrated outside the courthouse, expressing anger at the decision. (Itim)

GSS collaborator asks to have son returned from Jericho

A GENERAL Security Service collaborator yesterday petitioned the High Court of Justice to ask that the state get his three-year-old son back from Jericho for him.

Rami Barhum, an Israeli Arab who has been working with the GSS for 25 years, said his wife and son disappeared from their Jerusalem home on February 5. He later discovered that they were with his wife's family in Jericho, but the police said they had no authority to act in Jericho, and could therefore do nothing to get his son back.

Barhum then asked the Israeli-Palestinian liaison committee for help, but was told that the committee's hands were tied, because, though there is a clause which deals with the extradition of Palestinians to Israel, there is

nothing in the Oslo Accords which deals with the transfer of Israelis from the Palestinian Authority to Israel. Barhum's wife and son are also Israeli Arabs.

Barhum therefore petitioned the court for help. The court is to hear the case on Thursday.

Biggest Canada mission

THE largest ever Canadian mission to Israel - "1996 Mission 3000" of the United Israel Appeal of Canada - is due here today.

Two jumbo jets will bring 1,200 donors aged 20 to 85, 60 percent for the first time, including families, couples and singles.

During the eight-day mission, the visitors will view the grave of Yitzhak Rabin and be addressed by Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert.

The opening event will take place tonight in the new Olympic ice-skating arena at Canada Center in Metulla, built jointly by Canadian Jewry and Metulla.

Canadian Jewry, which totals 360,000, raises more funds for Israel than any Jewish community other than the US. Batseva Tsur

Fire and Rescue Commission gets additional NIS 50 million

THE Treasury added NIS 50 million to the Fire and Rescue Commission's budget following the Jerusalem Corridor fire last July. Interior Minister Haim Ramon told the Knesset State Control Committee yesterday.

Ramon said some NIS 20 million will be used to purchase new equipment, while another NIS 20 million will be used to increase manpower. Currently, Ramon said, the country has some 1,000 firefighters, but needs at least another 1,000 - particularly since some of the current complement are too old to handle the necessary physical work.

State Comptroller Miriam Ben-Porat blasted the government's long-standing inattention to the problems in the commission. She noted that she has repeatedly warned about these deficiencies, which literally endanger human life, but despite this, she said, successive governments have failed to give the issue "the appropriate attention."

However, committee chairman David Magen (Likud) praised Ramon for his efforts to improve the situation, and said his words aroused hope that perhaps the issue was finally being taken seriously.

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NATO acts swiftly to build on Rome summit

ANGUS MACSWAN

SARAJEVO

NATO acted swiftly yesterday to build on the Rome summit which rescued the Bosnia peace accord from the brink of collapse, calling military leaders of the former warring factions to talks on a US aircraft carrier.

A Joint Military Commission meeting hosted by US Admiral Leighton Smith, commander of the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR), was the first contact since the Bosnian Serbs severed ties with NATO over the arrest last month of two senior army officers.

A fast restoration of dialogue was vital to the peace process, as the finer - but essential - details of military and civilian agreements are thrashed out in a complex series of meetings.

The arrest, and deportation a week ago, of the two officers from Sarajevo to the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague was one of the critical issues threatening the hard-crafted Dayton peace accord that led to the weekend's short-notice Rome talks.

At the summit, the presidents of Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia patched up some deep-rooted differences, agreeing to resume all-party talks, to suspend UN sanctions on Bosnian Serbs, to work to ease tensions in Sarajevo and the divided town of Mostar and adopt a policy on war crimes and prisoners.

"In Rome we have avoided a crisis," said US envoy Richard Holbrooke, architect of the pact which ended Bosnia's 43 months of conflict.

Asked to attend the meeting with Smith on the USS George Washington were Bosnian government army chief General Rasim Delic, his ally, Major-General Zivko Budimir of the Croat army, and Major-General Zvonimir, deputy commander of the separatist Serb army and British Lieutenant-General Michael Walker, commander of NATO's Europe Rapid Reaction Corps.

"This is another step in IFOR's efforts to continue contacts between all parties and build confidence in the interest of ensuring the continued successful implementation of the General Framework Agreement (peace accord)," a NATO statement issued in Sarajevo said.

The summit began with Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic shaking hands in a gesture of conciliation. It ended with their joint pledge to implement Dayton to the letter.

Suzanna Agnelli, foreign minister of Italy which hosted the two-day meeting as European Union president, said it had been "a race

against time" because of tensions in Bosnia.

Milosevic won a promise from the United States that it would agree to moves towards suspending UN sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs as long as NATO commanders in Bosnia are satisfied that Serb forces are complying with Dayton.

The three presidents reiterated a pledge to cooperate with the international war crimes tribunal in The Hague and agreed that only suspects already indicted by the tribunal should be arrested.

They said the reunification of Sarajevo should be carried out on schedule, with the handover of five Serb-held suburbs to the Croat-Muslim federation to be completed by March 20.

The international community's High Representative for Bosnia, Carl Bildt, said it was vital for Serbs to remain in the Bosnian capital.

Bosnian Serbs fear that, when their former foes take over certain areas of Sarajevo, they will be subject to revenge attacks for the 3-1/2-year siege and shelling which the mainly Muslim government says killed 10,000 people and wounded 50,000.

The leaders reaffirmed their "strong commitment" to implementing Bosnia's Muslim-Croat federation, a keystone of Dayton to counter-balance the powerful Bosnian Serbs. (Reuters)



An RAF Sea King helicopter lowers a salvage worker onto the deck of the crippled tanker 'Sea Empress' off the Welsh coast yesterday. Aircraft sprayed chemicals on a two-mile-long slick in an effort to keep the oil from reaching islands which are among Europe's most important bird sanctuaries.

Salvage team tries to anchor grounded oil tanker

MILFORD HAVEN, Wales (Reuters) - A 20-member salvage team was airlifted onto the grounded oil tanker *Sea Empress* at first light yesterday and will attempt to secure the ship to the seabed before trying to transfer its cargo, officials said.

The vessel has so far spilled some 400 tonnes of light crude oil onto a coastline reputed for its wildlife, and experts are fighting to avoid an environmental disaster.

Oil still trickled from the stern of the Liberian-registered tanker, which ran aground on Thursday off the south Wales coast carrying 130,000 tonnes of oil.

Three aircraft were spraying the six-km brown and black oil slick.

Coastguards said a patch of heavy oil was filling a nearby bay but the worst of the spill appeared to have been contained.

"The next big hurdle is to secure the vessel firmly - actually physically moor her to the sea (bed) using a number of anchors," Joe Small, head of the marine Pollution Control Unit, said.

Anchoring the ship to the seabed will enable the salvage team to bring the vessel, which has been lying on its side with its deck battered by huge waves, back onto an even keel before transferring its cargo.

The work is expected to take two days, depending on weather conditions, and salvage officials hope to start moving a smaller tanker alongside by midweek. Weather forecasters said the gales were likely to continue until this evening.

Rough seas and gales forced a salvage team off the ship and the ship survived the stormy night with two tugs holding it in place.

Peter Cooney, managing director of Acomarit, which operated the *Sea Empress*, said salvagers were working in extreme conditions. "You must understand that you are under significant forces here - the sea, the wind and the weather and indeed the tide," Cooney said.

"The game plan is to control the ship as much as is practically possible. The ship to a very large extent will control her own destiny

because this is a 140,000-tonne vessel that has no propulsion."

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has launched an operation to save as many sea-birds, dolphins and seals as possible from the oil.

Conservationists say the area is home to as many as 100,000 birds. Rare red-throated divers and guillemots have already been found coated with oil.

"At the moment the situation seems not to be too serious...but it doesn't necessarily mean that that won't change for the worse tomorrow or the next day," Louise Tickle of The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) said.

The RSPB said it was worried about government policies on prevention of oil spills.

"It is of great concern to the RSPB that government appears to be courting disaster by permitting oil and gas exploration in highly sensitive marine and coastal areas around Britain," said Philip Rothwell, head of policy operations.

Carnival Rio bursts into dance

RIO DE JANEIRO (Reuters) - Rio de Janeiro's carnival beaded toward its climax on Sunday night and into the early hours yesterday as the first of the thousands-strong "Special" samba schools burst into an orgy of colour, flesh and music.

Giant floats, dancing girls whose feathers and tangas left little to the imagination and endless streams of revellers in costumes paraded down Rio's Sambadrome to the heart-throbbing beat of samba music.

The acrid smell of fireworks hung in the tropical air as Rio's four-day feast of extravaganza and excess culminated in the first of two dusk-till-dawn nights of competition between the top ranked samba groups.

In the streets outside, thousands of people dressed up, or down, to take part in street parties fuelled by freely flowing beer and sugar cane spirit alcohol.

"Tonight is the time for a megasalad of rhythm and noise," blared

the *O Globo* newspaper.

"Carnival is all about having fun," said Oswaldo Jardim, artistic director of the Mangueira school, which was to try and delight Sambadrome audiences last night with what promised to be one of their most spectacular sights.

Rio had to shake off the blues from heavy flooding the previous weekend in which at least 60 people died to get down to what Brazilians call the "World's Greatest Party".

The pre-Lenten parades kicked off gently on Friday night with the lowest grade samba troupes from the poorest slums, worst hit by the torrential rains.

On Saturday night it was the turn of the higher "A" grade schools.

But the feast of excess that takes over Brazil's tourist capital every Carnival only really began for many Sunday night and yesterday with the special schools, whose budgets start at \$800,000 and run into millions.

"Anarchists yes, but not all of us," was the title of the parade by one of the favourites to capture the Carnival 1996 crown, the Salgueiro school's 4,500-strong troupe.

"Not better, not worse, just a different kind of school," read the T-shirts of Salgueiro aficionados as the stands of the Sambadrome burst into a sea of red and white Salgueiro flags.

The school members danced their hearts out, oblivious to their stifling costumes. Floats towering up to 3 meters in height trembled as their passengers thrashed to the music.

Organisers said they expected 70,000 people to cram into the Sambadrome. Millions more would watch the televised all-night processions from the comfort of their armchairs.

Local newspapers reported that the festivities represented a turnover of \$1 billion for Rio de Janeiro in beer and whisky sales and hotel bookings.

Russian troops set to storm Chechen stronghold

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia's top military commander in the North Caucasus vowed yesterday to wipe out by the end of the day a group of separatist rebels besieged by Russian troops for three days in a village in Chechnya.

General Anatoly Kvashnin, quoted by Itar-Tass news agency, said federal forces were in complete control of the situation around Novogrozny, a rebel stronghold about 60 km east of Chechnya's capital Grozny.

"By the end of the day the federal forces blockading a group of rebels in the village of Novogrozny will end an operation to eliminate them," Tass quoted Kvashnin as saying at a meeting in Grozny of the region's Moscow-installed government. Citizens near Novogrozny

told local reporters Russian artillery and helicopter gunships had attacked the settlement and the neighboring village of Bochi-Yun, but this could not immediately be confirmed.

Kvashnin, who commands Russia's North Caucasus military district, said civilians had been allowed to leave Novogrozny through corridors left by the Russian troops and only separatist fighters remained there.

Earlier yesterday Interfax news agency said Russian forces had trapped up to 1,000 rebels in the settlement but were unable to advance on them because of heavy fog.

In a separate report, Interfax said Russian troops had killed or wounded 30 rebel guerrillas in the last 24 hours when they tried to break out of Novogrozny.

The Russian interior ministry, quoted by Tass, said one Russian serviceman was wounded yesterday near the village when rebels opened fire with grenade-launchers and other weapons.

Rebel commander-in-chief Aslan Maskhadov has been based in Novogrozny, a settlement of several thousand people, in recent weeks.

Chechen field commanders Shamil Basayev and Salman Raduyev were also there in January for the release of more than 40 hostages seized by rebels who escaped after a raid on neighboring Dagestan.

The rebels are still holding scores of other hostages they want to swap for Chechens taken prisoner by Russian forces.

Russia sent troops into Chechnya in December 1994 to crush a three-year independence bid led by Dzhokhar Dudayev. Tens of thousands of people have been killed, but separatists still control large areas of the region.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin is working on a peace initiative to try to end the unpopular conflict before a June 16 presidential election in which he will seek a second term.

A special commission set up under Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin submitted its proposals to Nationalities Minister Vyacheslav Mikhailov yesterday, Tass said.

The commission's conclusions are to be presented to Yeltsin before a February 28 meeting of the policy-making Security Council inner circle of top officials. Interfax said the proposals would be handed over within two days.

Yeltsin's efforts to subdue the separatists by force have been widely criticized as ill-considered, brutal and inept.

In the past three months, Russian troops have allowed rebels to escape from two besieged settlements - Gudermes in eastern Chechnya and Pervomayskoye in the neighboring Dagestan region.

Tass said peace talks in Grozny between local officials and village leaders from Novogrozny had broken down.

"The result here has been nil. We have to start from scratch," the agency quoted Doku Zavgayev, head of the Moscow-installed Chechen government, as saying.

Poll: Britons increasingly desert royal family

LONDON (Reuters) - The British public stood by their royal family through the row over King Edward VIII's abdication, the divorce of Queen Elizabeth's sister and even the break-up of the marriage of Prince Charles, the heir to the throne.

But now, worn down by a succession of scandals, Britons increasingly agree that the royal family is an expensive luxury the country can no longer afford, an opinion poll said.

The MORI poll published by the *Independent* newspaper said two out of three people thought Britain would not suffer if the monarchy was abolished and 42 percent thought Queen Elizabeth and her relatives cost the country too much.

Only 41 percent believed Charles would make a good king, while 40 percent thought he would be a bad one. As recently as 1991, 82 percent said he had what it took to rule.

The royal family's popularity has been eroding steadily. The percentage of Britons saying that the country would be worse off without royalty has fallen from 50 percent in May 1992 and 40 percent in December 1994 to 34 percent now.

The royals, to be sure, have been through some bad years as royal marriages fell apart amid acrimony and title-tattle about extramarital liaisons.

The security of the monarchy had seemed assured in 1981 when Charles married shy, blonde Princess Diana in a romantic ceremony that captivated the

world's imagination. A year later, a golden-haired heir was born.

But the fairy-tale image of the royal family as a symbol of British nationhood and a shining example of conventional morality collapsed in 1992.

Prince Andrew, the queen's second son, split from his boisterous wife Sarah ("Fergie"), after six years of marriage. A few months later pictures were published showing Fergie frolicking topless with financier John Bryan.

Princess Anne, the queen's daughter, got divorced and Charles and Diana topped off the queen's "annus horribilis" by announcing they were separating.

Not since Edward VIII left the throne in 1936 rather than give up American divorcee Wallis Simpson had Buckingham Palace known such domestic upset.

The 1978 divorce of the queen's sister, Princess Margaret, from photographer Lord Snowdon was accepted with more equanimity.

The royal institution has been rocked by more than just marital scandal. Newspapers have questioned whether the royals were overpaid and the queen has finally agreed to pay tax.

Fergie's free-spending ways have evoked lively fodder for press headlines, while virtually every top royal, from Charles to his father Prince Philip, have seen transcripts of their intimate telephone conversations plastered on the front pages.

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All said, almost done, in N.H. primary

NEWS AGENCIES
CONCORD, N.H.

WITH Sen. Bob Dole claiming only he can unite the party, Lamar Alexander scoffing at Dole as a weakened figure and Pat Buchanan saying he's got them all scared, Republican candidates took their final shots yesterday before the New Hampshire primary.

"Senator Dole's guys are saying today, 'We're going to win it ugly.' Isn't that an indictment, quite frankly, of what's going on in Washington?" Buchanan said on ABC television.

While Buchanan offers red meat, Alexander represents a kinder, gentler Republican who wants to send power away from Washington and back to states, cities and neighborhoods. Wearing a red and black plaid shirt, he has been walking across New Hampshire, playing pianos wherever he finds them, and planned to complete his trek yesterday in the coastal town of Portsmouth.

Alexander, a self-proclaimed Washington outsider, targeted Dole too as the three bowed for room at the top with polls showing them bunched together.

"Bob Dole is ducking interviews. He's running negative ads. He doesn't have one single idea about how to lead us into the next century," the former Education Secretary said as he made the rounds of morning talk shows.

Dole was the only major Republican candidate who did not appear this morning on the network TV talk shows, although failed hopeful Phil Gramm showed up on NBC to tout his weekend endorsement of Dole.

Dole spokesman Nelson Warfield, speaking outside a Rochester computer component plant Dole was touring, explained, "We're taking our message one-on-one directly to the voters."

Gramm called Dole, "the only candidate that has any chance of bringing economic conservatives and social conservatives together to create a united party."

Buchanan, Gramm said, would only divide. "I think his views on

trade are so radical and would be so disastrous to the country that there's no way that mainstream economic conservatives would support him."

In recent days, his religious and protectionist rhetoric has become more and more strident. He affirmed his faith in the literal truth of the biblical account of creation and dismissed Darwinism as nonsense. Then at a rally, he spoke of "peasants with pitchforks" storming the Republican ramparts.

The former presidential speech writer told CNN yesterday: "We're going to change the Republican Party. We're going to make it working class. Working class, middle class folks don't have any voice in Washington."

Publisher Steve Forbes, trailing badly in fourth place, used a sports analogy to push his message that he can't be counted out. "I'm convinced we'll build support as we go... it's gonna go into extra innings," Forbes told CBS.

The balloting begins at 6 a.m. today, but the GOP rivals already are looking beyond this first primary to the crowded nominating calendar that will follow - and to the Nov. 5 election against President Clinton.

Of the eight campaigning Republicans, late polls showed the top three bunched, with the edge still to Dole, the Senate majority leader and now-shaken front-runner. But Alexander and Buchanan were so close behind as to be statistically tied with him in some surveys.

Gramm was the 30th Republican senator to endorse Dole, along with 24 governors and assorted other party leaders.

"We share a common objective," Dole said. "We want to keep the Republican Party together. We want to make the Republican Party stronger."

Gramm said Buchanan's campaign is a refuge for racists, but Buchanan, a conservative television commentator and newspaper columnist, denied it.



The mangled wreckage of the No. 171 bus traveling to Kings Cross lies in The Strand on Sunday night after a suspected IRA bomber blew up the bus exploded a bomb, possibly by accident, according to Scotland Yard detectives.

Survivor of IRA blast may be bomber

News agencies
LONDON

POLICE moved in yesterday to guard one of the survivors of an IRA blast that wrecked a London double-decker bus, prompting speculation that at least one of the bombers was still alive.

One Irish Republican Army man was apparently killed when the bomb went off prematurely, security sources said.

The IRA warned Britain that it might broaden its campaign to other cities after three London bombs in 10 days marked a bloody end to their 17-month-old ceasefire. Witnesses at a London hospital treating the victims confirmed that one survivor was under armed police guard. He has a fractured skull and pelvis.

Police refused to comment on his identity but an anti-terrorist source told the Evening Standard: "We are treating this man as one of the bombers."

Detectives and Irish republican sources said they thought it was a bungled bomb attack that went off prematurely.

The IRA admitted responsibility yesterday for the blast which killed one person and injured nine. Four were still hospitalized yesterday.

Police believe the bomb was accidentally detonated near the Waldorf Hotel, and that the IRA's bomb carrier may have been among the victims. The IRA has now killed three people in London since calling off its 17-month cease-fire Feb. 9.

Despite demands from some Protestant political leaders that the government simply lock up suspected IRA leaders, British and

Irish leaders persisted in efforts to salvage something from the battered peace process in Northern Ireland.

Londoners, meanwhile, settled in to the familiar routine of bomb alerts, train cancellations and immobilized traffic.

"You have always got it in the back of your mind that you could be in the same street next time," said John Langton, who was delivering meat yesterday near the scene of the bombing.

"I am just carrying on as normal. There is nothing you can do - except hope the bombs don't come to you."

Scotland Yard said there was no warning before the explosion at 10:38 p.m. at the edge of the theater district near Covent Garden's popular restaurants and bars.

Commander John Grieve, head of Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist unit, said yesterday that the bus "was not the intended target," although he couldn't say what was.

The IRA, in a statement telephoned to the BBC in Belfast, Northern Ireland, claimed responsibility. "We can say at this stage we regret the loss of life and injuries which occurred," the caller said.

The mangled and burned wreckage continued to block traffic yesterday while police technicians probed for clues. Buses carry video cameras but it wasn't known if they survived the blast.

Dr. David Williams, director of Accidents and Emergencies at St. Thomas' Hospital where the victims were treated, confirmed yesterday that armed guards were on duty in the hospital. Scotland Yard refused to comment on the reason.

Williams said one injured man, Ralf Hobart of Torquay in southwestern England, suffered severe injuries on the right side of his face and was in critical condition. His girlfriend, Denise Hall, 30, also was injured.

Peter Robinson, deputy leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, the third-largest and exclusively Protestant party in Northern Ireland, urged the government to simply lock up suspected IRA leaders.

Sir Patrick Mayhew, Britain's minister responsible for governing Northern Ireland, said the search for a peaceful settlement would continue despite the bombing, and he rejected Protestant calls for the government to end all contacts with the IRA's allies in the Sinn Fein party.

"It's perfectly clear that this (bombing) is part of a campaign designed to make the British government, a democratic government, comply with the wishes of terrorists. But of course that's going to fail," Mayhew said.

John Hume, leader of the Social Democratic and Labor Party, which gets most Roman Catholic votes in Northern Ireland, met for two hours yesterday with British Prime Minister John Major. Hume said they exchanged proposals but he gave no details.

First British Nazi war crime trial opens

DORKING, England (AP) - The magistrate in Britain's first Nazi war crimes case began hearing argument yesterday over whether to try an 85-year-old retired carpenter on charges of murdering Jews in World War II.

Dressed in a flat cap and a gray fur coat over a blue flannel shirt and looking frail, Szymon Serafimowicz, a native of Belarus, walked slowly into Dorking Magistrates' Court accompanied by his lawyer.

Serafimowicz denies three charges of murdering Jews in Belarus, then a part of the Soviet Union known as Byelorussia. A fourth charge was dismissed Jan. 4.

The hearing at the court in Dorking, 40 km southwest of London, is expected to last two months. Most of the evidence will remain secret, to avoid prejudic-

ing a jury.

He is free on bail at his home in Banstead, near here.

An estimated 200,000 Jews were killed in Belarus during the 1939-45 conflict.

Survivors say Serafimowicz was responsible for thousands of the deaths as the police commander of the Mir district of Belarus during the Nazi occupation in 1941 and 1942.

Serafimowicz came to Britain in 1947.

Now a British citizen, he is the first person charged under Britain's 1991 War Crimes Act. It authorizes prosecution of alleged war criminals who were not British residents at the time for crimes not committed on British soil.

Unlike the United States, Britain will not extradite suspected war criminals.

Kohl, Yeltsin, discuss elections

MOSCOW (AP) - President Boris Yeltsin discussed his reelection bid with "dear friend" Helmut Kohl in the Kremlin yesterday and said he was worried by the decrease of German business interests in Russia.

Yeltsin said it has become apparent that German businessmen are taking a wait-and-see attitude following the Communist and nationalist victory in December's parliamentary polls and ahead of the presidential election.

"German businessmen want to wait until June to see the fate of reforms," he said after a 2 1/2-hour meeting with Kohl.

Yeltsin announced last Thursday that he is seeking a second term, and yesterday, he gave Kohl a "frank" account of main

rivals, who are topped by the Communist Gennady Zyuganov.

Some Russian news reports said Kohl's visit was planned as an endorsement of Yeltsin's decision and a boost to the incumbent.

Asked about that at a news conference, Kohl said only that he "welcomed" Yeltsin's step.

Outright Western support of Yeltsin is not necessarily beneficial to the Russian president. His Communist and ultranationalist opponents accuse him of being too friendly with the West - at Russia's expense.

Yeltsin, who has worried the West in recent weeks by showing signs of backing away from market reforms, told reporters he would not budge from the reform process "one step, half a step, even a centimeter."

Rocket launches six satellites

MOSCOW (AP) - A rocket carrying six satellites blasted off yesterday from Russia's northern Plesetsk launch site.

The launch was at 00:58 GMT. The Cyclone-3 rocket carried three Cosmos satellites for the Defense Ministry and three Gonsets-D1 rockets for civilian communications use, reports said.

The Gonsets-D1s are the first in what will be a series of 45 satellites orbiting 1,500 kilometers

above the earth. Among other things, the satellites will transmit electronic mail, the reports said.

None of the reports gave details about the military satellites.

Another launch, that one from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Central Asia, was also scheduled for yesterday, the ITAR-Tass news agency said.

It said a Proton-K rocket was to put a Raduga communications satellite in orbit.

Report: O.J. Simpson scans Ireland

NEW YORK - Is O.J. Simpson planning to become O.J. Simpson? A New York newspaper reported yesterday that Simpson may be cycling Ireland in search of a seaside estate as a new home to escape media attention.

"To the Irish people, Simpson is more of a side show," said an Irish government official who requested anonymity. "He wouldn't be hounded here as he would be in the States."

Representatives for the former football star, acquitted Oct. 3 of the murders of his wife and her friend, said real estate dealers in the County Kerry were searching for the new home, according to the New York Post. In addition, US federal and California officials suspect Simpson may be trying to shelter his cash to avoid having to settle with money if he loses two pending wrongful-death suits, according to the Post (Agencies)

Solidarity concedes referendum a flop

WARSAW (Reuters) - Informal estimates suggested a turnout of less than half in Poland's referendum on sharing out state assets, and the Solidarity union conceded yesterday that its latest challenge to the ruling ex-communists had flopped.

"The general aim, returning assets to the citizen, has not been won. There was an inadequate turnout and the government will be able to carry on doing what it wants," Solidarity's Mazowsze region leader Maciej Jankowski told Reuters.

By law, more than half the 28 million voters had to take part to make the government act on the vote, in which Solidarity sought a mandate for state firms and other assets to be distributed among citizens in the form of free coupons.

But Polish media organisations, informally monitoring polling stations, put participation at about 30

to 40 percent.

"The first referendum in democratic Poland turned out to be a dud," the right-leaning Zycie Warszawy daily commented.

Solidarity's former leader Lech Walesa called the vote on its behalf in one of his last acts as Polish president after losing November polls to ex-communist Aleksander Kwasniewski.

He posed a single question of principle designed to challenge the ex-communist ruling party's cautious policy on privatising remaining state firms: "Are you for carrying out a general transfer of (state) property to the citizen?"

The union said the vote was a last chance to create a broad property-owning class and prevent assets being kept under state control or cornered by a narrow elite of ex-communist managers.

Turkish Islamic political problems remain

ANKARA (AP) - A deal to form a conservative government with an anti-Western Islamic movement appeared closer to completion yesterday, but major hurdles remained, including the coalition's goals and Cabinet.

"Unfortunately we have not been able to conclude our talks and announce the good news to our people" that a government has been formed, ex-Premier Mesut Yilmaz, leader of the center-right Motherland party, said as he sat next to Necmettin Erbakan, head of the Islamic Welfare party.

Yilmaz had predicted a government deal would be sealed by last night, which marks the end of the Moslem holy month of Ramadan.

He told reporters yesterday afternoon that the two leaders had agreed that he head the government for 10 months, then hand over the premiership to Erbakan.

Another Welfare figure would be the deputy premier during Yilmaz's reign, a Welfare deputy told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

He said Erbakan would lead the government for the following two years and then hand the position back to Yilmaz for another year, under the proposed plan.

Said Erbakan: "We have reached the final stages in our efforts to form a government."

After an abrupt cancellation of the talks on Sunday, an all-night negotiation session seemed to

help eliminate some differences. The two sides moved closer when Yilmaz apparently dropped his demand that Motherland govern alone initially and have the pro-Islamic Welfare party join in a coalition later.

Yilmaz told reporters that divvying up of ministries still had to be worked out. Then the two sides would begin work on a joint program.

"If these discussions (on the ministries) are completed by Friday, we hope to start negotiations on a coalition program ... and we hope to form a coalition government as soon as possible," Yilmaz said.

The next meeting was set for tomorrow.

Villages mourn as probe begins into tunnel collapse

TOKYO (AP) - More than 120 Japanese police began yesterday investigating the highway tunnel cave-in that killed 20 people.

A newspaper and a news agency said they would look into whether there was criminal negligence in failing to foresee the fall of a huge boulder that smashed through the tunnel roof Feb. 10, crushing a car and a bus inside.

Meanwhile, in the fishing village of Furubira, the home of a dozen of the victims, funeral services were held and students at elementary and secondary schools observed a moment of silence to remember their dead classmates.

Townpeople prayed and offered incense at a white-cloth-covered altar near the tunnel.

"In Mourning," said notices posted all over town.

It took authorities a full week to break up the boulder with dynamite and dig through the rubble. Workers found 19 bodies on the bus Saturday evening and medical examiners concluded they had been killed almost instantly. The body of the car's driver had been found a day earlier.

The government defended itself against complaints that it took too long to dig out the bus and car and determine the victims' fate. Chief government spokesman Seiuro Kajiyama said the rescue effort was carried out under difficult conditions.

"It is categorically inappropriate to say that the work was delayed or inadequate," he said.

Nobuyuki Yagi, a spokesman for police on the northern island of Hokkaido, site of the Toyohama Tunnel, said 122 police investigators have been assigned to the probe. Officials refused to comment on the focus of the investigation, but the newspaper Asahi and Kyodo News service said it concerned whether the cave-in could have been predicted.

The Hokkaido Development Bureau, responsible for road maintenance in the area, has said it made daily checks of the tunnel and a day before the cave-in found nothing abnormal.

Authorities have closed the tunnel highway indefinitely.

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An avoidable tragedy

It is perhaps inevitable that only especially shocking traffic accidents produce public outrage. The usual daily death toll seems to be treated as part of an unfortunate but unavoidable routine, and the grisly accumulation of yearly victims is accepted as not much more than sad statistics.

But yesterday's tragedy near Kibbutz Lavie was an unmitigated horror - not only because it cost the lives of children, but because it was eminently avoidable. In fact, it provided an excellent example of what causes many of the fatal accidents in this country.

First, the section of the road on which the accident occurred is known as "the death curve." It is not only a sharp curve, but a steep strip exposed to fierce winds. In 1995, 22 accidents occurred there, causing four fatalities and 60 serious injuries.

Second, the brakes of the semitrailer which caused the accident were faulty.

Third, the semitrailer's 25-year-old driver, Mohammed Salah Hammoudi, who acquired his driver's license five years ago, has a record of 16 convictions on traffic violations, including four for speeding.

None of these elements should have been allowed to exist. The road should have been

improved before an accident ever occurred on it; no great insight is needed to tell that this kind of curve is an invitation to havoc. That nothing was done even after a year plagued by 22 accidents and four fatalities betrays an attitude bordering on criminal negligence.

The semitrailer should not have been allowed on the road with faulty brakes. That the Ministry of Transport does not make the inspection of such vehicles a top priority, and that it does not mete out severe punishments to transgressors, means that it is not doing its job. It is no secret that buses and trucks are responsible for a disproportionate number of fatal accidents in Israel. The least the police and the Transport Ministry can do is remove defective vehicles from the country's highways.

But the most outrageous aspect of the tragedy is that a man of Hammoudi's record is allowed to possess a driving license. In such cases it is obviously a license to kill. As studies have shown, the most lethal cause of road accidents is speed. When the chronic speeder is a driver of a giant vehicle, his chances of killing multiply. There is something fundamentally, sickeningly wrong with a court system which knowingly invites the killing of children by allowing such drivers access to the country's roads.

Yeltsin bounces back

TWO months ago it seemed inconceivable that President Boris Yeltsin would run again for office in this year's Russian election. Indeed, any suggestion that the frail and tottering president might harbor any such idea would have been put down to an indication of a further deterioration of his faculties. Yet last week when he flew to a rare warm welcome, albeit in his hometown of Yekaterinburg, some of the Yeltsin of yore seemed to have come bouncing back as he announced his candidacy.

The question remains whether the 65-year-old Yeltsin will have the physical and political stamina to stay on the grueling course of the election campaign, let alone that of another four years in office, should he confound the pundits and win. The key to his amazing resilience seems to lie in his firm belief that nothing less than the future of the reform movement in Russia rests on his shoulders. It is a rekindling of the fire that led the previously unremarkable Yeltsin up on a tank and into the history books when he faced down the communist coup against Mikhail Gorbachev in 1991. In fact, he believes he is now facing another attempted communist coup, this time by election.

Western political experts, especially in Washington, have been agonizing over whether Yeltsin remains "the right man" to depend on in mapping out foreign policy vis a vis Russia. It is the same agonizing which surfaces from time to time over such countries as Algeria - namely, is it time to dump the "moderates" and look to the realism of a new generation of different rulers whom it might be best not to antagonize at an early stage, as was done in Iran.

Yeltsin is trailing hopelessly in opinion polls - often down to single digit "approval" during some Chechnya crisis or other. Yet, paradoxically, if the man himself does not last the course, it remains true that his policies of reform have been the right ones and will probably outlive him. Yeltsin has charged that a win for Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov would mean "the destruction of the country." Zyuganov in turn sneers at Yeltsin as a "weak pawn of the Americans." This is indeed good old election rhetoric, but "election rhetoric" is a phrase tossed around with ease in most countries, either by opponents to discredit a candidate's consistency, or by supporters to explain it away.

The reality for the moment appears to be that Yeltsin's reforms of the last four years have become too deeply embedded, even in former communists, to be dismantled easily. Even those who have made much of Yeltsin backing away from reform have been doing some rapid rethinking after his brilliant performance in Yekaterinburg. The *Kommersant* Daily newspaper, for example, said Yeltsin had revived hopes that he might beat off Zyuganov's challenge in June. The daily *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* also noted that "Yeltsin is portrayed as above any parties and distanced from ideologies; he is presenting himself as an all-national leader."

That is far from saying he might win, but - if Zyuganov and his followers fight democratically to gain power, and keep assurances that if they win it they will not undermine democracy - it would be a victory the world could live with. Given the choice of the plodding but basically decent Zyuganov and the extremely dangerous Vladimir Zhirinovskiy on the nationalist right, it is unlikely even the most hardline American Republican would opt for the flaky Zhirinovskiy. Even if Yeltsin loses, Russia and the world can at least hope his legacy will be more difficult to dismiss than the man himself.



Now you see it, now you don't!

Shape up, or wind up

Funny how we journalists are so cynical when it comes to assessing the future of others and so naive when it comes to our own.

For one week, the future of *Davar Rishon* appeared sealed. The *Histadrut* said it hadn't found a buyer, and there was no point in pouring any more money in to keep the newspaper alive.

Suddenly, on Thursday, there was a breakthrough. The *Histadrut* would enter a partnership with a group of investors that would seek to buy the daily.

Zvi Goren, a *Davar Rishon* columnist, put it this way: "There was no miracle here, but a victory for wisdom and the recognition that it isn't enough to talk about freedom of the press; there must be concern that there will be newspapers."

I hate to be a party-pooper - but what will this group of investors see in *Davar Rishon*, that a previous investor, Jean Friedman, missed? Friedman was interested in buying the newspaper until he found out that *Davar* had nothing except lots of paychecks and a masthead. The readers had long left. The newspaper's biggest advertiser was its former owner, the *Histadrut*.

In the end, what was Friedman - as great a supporter of the Labor-led government as any financier - or any other prospective buyer actually being offered? Turns out little more than a reputation, and that doesn't exactly promise a profit.

A reprieve always brings with it hope. But I wonder how many of the revelers consider whether the *Histadrut's* last-minute bailout is simply smart politics by Secretary-General Amir Peretz at a time when he and his colleagues face a primary battle in Labor. How do we know the *Histadrut* decision won't be reversed after national elections in a mere three months?

LET'S talk economics. Israel's print media is being downsized. The two financial dailies *Globes* and *Telegraph* are in a death grip, and so far the former has two-thirds of the readers and perhaps even more of the advertisers. *Telegraph*, which is traded on the stock exchange, has more capital than most start-up newspapers, but after a while even the patient investor wants to cut his

losses.

Another victim in the striking print media could be the loser in the *Yedioth Ma'ariv* battle. In which two newspapers look alike, read alike, and sometimes even report alike.

Both papers have lost circulation, and *Yedioth* has lost advertising. *Ma'ariv* editor and publisher Ofer Nimrodi is in trouble up to his ears with the wiretapping affair and,

American capitalism has swept in with a vengeance throughout Israel's print media

given the choice of where to put his money - in his legal defense or to prop up a struggling tabloid - I think the answer is obvious. *Yedioth's* Moshe Yardi has just resigned as editor, but his newspaper, which retained its market share in circulation.

Well, that leaves two Hebrew dailies - a far cry from the nine that *Yedioth* had only two years ago. Remember *Al Hanishar*, *Hadashot*, *Yom Leyom*? The name of the game is capitalism, and its Darwinian principles are being felt most in the media business.

Here there is no pressure for a government bailout; no sight of reporters burning tires in the streets; no drive for a massive subscription campaign to save an ailing newspaper.

In many ways, it's still better here than in America. Most major US cities, some of them which come close to or equal the size of Israel's population, have one newspaper. In two-newspaper towns, either the publications appeal to two distinct audiences - one upscale and one blue collar - or they both bleed to death until one of the owners decides it isn't worth the fight.

The shrinking of the market isn't necessarily bad. *Davar*, whatever its future portends, was a fine newspaper, but let's face it: union dues were paying for it. The government was

buying it, and nobody was reading it. It only became important during the *Histadrut* elections.

As *Davar Rishon*, the new management has to face hard reality. It takes years to build a readership, sometimes longer to convince advertisers that you're worth paying for a two-by-two.

Remember USA Today? It blew \$100 million until the national advertisers threw business its way. *Davar Rishon* couldn't do more than pay salaries for a few months.

What's left? The weeklies, for one. Those in the major cities are hard-hitting and often do a better job of coverage than the dailies. Many of them started as shoppers and slowly moved to paid circulation. That's called natural growth.

Then there's regional radio. You won't find much news, but you'll get plenty of traffic, weather, sports, music and call-ins. The government channel has the news. We foot the bill.

Television: Channel Two has eclipsed government television and set the standard for mighty entertainment: plenty of soap, American comedies and game shows (cable television fills in the gaps.) For better or for worse, they attract viewers.

Agriculture might be subsidized; the defense industries remain protected; textiles are still getting hand-outs. But American capitalism has swept in with a vengeance throughout Israel's print media.

If you're well-capitalized, cost-conscious, and keep in touch with the changing whims of your readership, you have a chance. Otherwise, prepare to join the graveyard of once-proud mastheads.

So as journalists, let's not kid ourselves. We might think we're smarter than our readership, and certainly more sophisticated. But if we don't remain credible - and that is the key to any publication - and report on our readers' interests, then we're out of business. In the end, it's their shekel, and we'd better remember that.

Ah, capitalism, the great leveler. The writer is a member of The Jerusalem Post editorial staff. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the paper.

Hired help

MARK L. LEVINSON

I'm not sure what the problem is, but I think the solution is wrong.

Davar Rishon recently reported "a proposal that security at crossings between Judea and Samaria and Gaza be manned by employees of a private guard company."

We may not be the first country to pay Filipinos to take care of our families, or Thais to work our farms, or Romanians to build our skyscrapers, but I suspect we would be the first in recent history to pay commercial watchmen to guard our borders.

What problem is this supposed to solve?

According to Independent Media Review & Analysis, which summarized the *Davar Rishon* article, deputy chief of staff Matan Vilnai is weighing the proposal because, for one thing, it would "reduce contact between the IDF and Palestinians at the crossings," in particular, Palestinian VIPs. The guards would not wear army uniforms.

Is the problem, then, that the VIPs (who commonly attained their status by violent Israeli-Palestine) are offended by the sight of our soldiers?

A case can be made for keeping soldiers away from a teeming and otherwise peaceful cashbar where they would only risk provocation - but if you can't put a soldier on your border, where can you put one?

If a Palestinian VIP is upset at confronting an Israeli soldier in order to enter Israeli territory, perhaps he had better just have a glass of water and stay in Gaza until he composes himself.

The item goes on: "One advantage of the proposal would be that there would be considerably less turnover at the positions as compared to IDF staffing."

Is that a hint? Do the soldiers and Palestinians need to be separated because inexperienced guards are misbehaving?

If that's the problem, it makes more sense to improve the guards' training rather than give up and replace them. The army may need lots of well-trained guards in the future, to exercise tact and authority in handling Arabs and others.

I thought the idea of putting so many people through the army and calling them back year after year was to maintain a pool of trained soldiers for any contingency. Why else would we so disrupt the economy with mass military service?

That's what I thought, and maybe I'm out of date.

There's talk of cutting back on army service. Voters get little

Paid watchmen to guard our borders? We'd be the first country to do it

enjoyment from serving - still less do they like their children tending kibbutzes - and the government's pretty confident no major attacks are pending. The main threat from day to day is infiltrators, and if we can pay a company to stop them for us...

MAYBE the real problem the paid watchmen are supposed to solve is how to free up the rest of us for more comfortable living. But it's still a bad idea. Financial deals are good only for quantifiable results.

How are you going to measure the level of border safety? A private firm supplies? The next terrorist may not be kind enough to explain to us how he entered the country.

And if we find out anyway, what will we do?

If, unlike today's guards, the contractor can't manage to lay the blame on a faulty metal detector, by how many shekels per victim will we dock his fee?

Of course we could run spot checks with mock terrorists, but where profit is involved, spot checks are too easily subject to chicanery. An army without the dedication to do its own guard duty won't be a dedicated critic of the guards who relieve it of that chore.

The army, in fact, might deeply understand any failure.

What with the Palestinian VIPs, their families, and their vehicles all immune to inspection, smuggling and infiltration through the checkpoints are laughably easy.

From the point of view of an army without the power to inspect, how to save face if the worst happens is a problem of the first magnitude.

Maybe that problem, after all, is the one not-military guards on the border are supposed to solve.

The writer is a Herzliya-based freelancer.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NO APOLOGY CALLED FOR

Sir, - To my amazement I have found no reaction to the unbelievable demand by the Palestine Authority that Israel should apologize to the Palestinians for its "behavior towards them throughout history" - as voiced by its senior official Aff Sa'afia and reported in your January 25 issue. To me, it is a clear indication that there can be no meaningful peace process with such a state of mind, and the earlier the government will recognize this, the more further damage to Israel's interests can be avoided.

If any apology is due, it would be on the part of the Arab people for having conquered the area of Palestine with the advent of Islam, allowing the land to go to pot over the centuries and treating abominably those Jews who had remained, and initiating violence and war against Zionism, when the Jewish people started to return to their homeland a century ago.

What Israeli behavior throughout

history does Mr. Sa'afia allude to? How can he draw a parallel between Germany, which liquidated millions as a matter of policy, and Israel, which had to kill Arabs in efforts to defend itself from annihilation?

Or does Mr. Sa'afia mean that Israel killed millions of Arabs? Aside from the fact that of course nothing like that happened, where would those millions have come from? The country was notoriously empty of inhabitants at the turn of this century. Ever since the failed 1948 invasion of the new Israel caused many Arabs in its area to flee, the Arab side has been talking about millions of refugees. If they are there, they could have come from one main source only: the uncounted thousands of Arab emigrants from all over the Middle East who were allowed to cross into Palestine during the British Mandate.

MAURICE A. HARTOG

Haifa.

ISRAEL BASHING

Sir, - It makes my blood boil to read criticism of Israel which is based on distortions of the truth. I am referring to the comment of Teddy Kolk on February 9 to the effect that Israel must bear some responsibility for the hatred which the Arabs feel for Israel since our country exacerbated the situation "by playing the part of the conquering nation from 1967 till now." What a misleading remark! Israel had a role of "conqueror" thrust upon it, as Mr. Kolk well knows, because it was compelled, yet again in 1967, to fight a defensive war against an enemy bent on wiping it out.

It is a well-known fact, but conveniently ignored by those looking for a stick with which to beat Israel, that as "conqueror" - an evasive word, beloved of Israel bashers the world over - Israel brought about tremendous improvements in the standard of living of the Arabs under its control and was only prevented from completing a housing project for the Gazans because of the threats of the PLO to kill Arabs who moved into such houses - since they would then lose their refugee status.

RHONA YEMINI
Director, Dowse Art Museum
Wellington, New Zealand.

ISRAEL MUSEUM

Sir, - On a trip to Jerusalem in January, I visited the Israel Museum. What a wonderful surprise! Many of the world's large museums have fantastic collections but few do them justice in the way they are presented and interpreted. Not so at the Israel Museum. The high standard of presentation of the exhibits is a credit to the director and staff.

The energy that exudes in this museum must surely reflect the commitment and leadership of the director, Dr. Weyl. It was with some sadness, but not without understanding, that subsequent to my visit, I read of Dr. Weyl's resignation. All over the world, directors of large institutions are facing demands and expectations on their skills and time far beyond that which is feasible. The requirement for Dr. Weyl to fund-raise 80 percent of his budget is a sad testimony to the value being placed on the museum.

Although acknowledging the complex demands on government financial resources, one would hope that the time is near when the somewhat meager 20 percent state funding could be increased.

It is said that in order for a nation to mature and proceed into the future, it must first know its past. Museums are the custodians of a nation's history and culture. An increased government commitment to this fine museum could well prove to be a sound investment for the people of Israel.

BOB MAYSMOR
Director, Dowse Art Museum
Wellington, New Zealand.

Profit isn't everything

SUSAN HATTIS ROLEF

Like the Koor concern, *Davar Rishon* (called *Davar* up to eight months ago) was *Histadrut*-owned for many decades. It reflected the socialist (some would say Bolshevik) approach of the workers' federation, which held that industry should exist not only for profit, but to serve social values - even at the expense of profits - and that there is nothing wrong with a mobilized, "ideological" press.

All this worked well while both Koor and *Davar* held their own, or the *Histadrut* covered their losses. But the *Histadrut's* growing economic insolvency at the end of the 1980s forced Koor to become an industrial conglomerate in which the *Histadrut* remained a minority shareholder and profits became the supreme, even if not sole driving force.

As a newspaper, *Davar* had difficulty following a similar pattern. Its daily sales fell to below 20,000, and it became highly questionable whether it could continue to come out, especially after the "New *Histadrut*" under the leadership of Haim Ramon and then Amir Peretz refused to cover the paper's losses indefinitely. Ramon doesn't believe in a mobilized press; Peretz cited the *Histadrut's* economic straits.

UNDER editor Ron Ben-Yishai, one of Israel's finest journalists, *Davar Rishon* is no longer the

Hebrew-language daily, then that is all it should have. They would add that this is the age of privately owned papers, whose right to exist is measured by how many copies they sell, and that there is no room in an enlightened country for publicly owned papers, even quality ones.

But what with the trial of *Ma'ariv* owner Ofer Nimrodi, the ugly personal wars of the Moses family (owners of *Yedioth Aharonot*) and the fate of Robert Maxwell (who almost became owner of *The Jerusalem Post* several years ago), there is something to be said for publicly owned newspapers. The only question is whether they should continue if they cannot show a profit after trimming off all the fat.

Just as no one in the enlightened world questions the need to subsidize national theaters or opera companies, a strong case can be made for public financing of quality papers, as long as they aren't wastefully run.

A quality paper is one whose articles are original and thought-provoking, whose reporting is as unbiased as possible, whose features are informative and factually accurate, and whose editorials and opinion pieces are intellectually honest, regardless of political stance. *Davar Rishon* is such a paper.

The writer is a political scientist.

The case for publicly financed quality newspapers

ing to reflect a social conscience and a concern for low-salaried workers (of whom there are still several million in this country) that *Ha'aretz*, with its laissez-faire approach, seems totally to lack.

The paper also has some first-class reporters (my favorites are political reporters Amir Neuman and Daniel Ben-Simon, and Mideast correspondent Dan Avidan), as well as some fine old-timers who would be like fish out of water at another paper.

Laissez-faire advocates would argue that if the public is willing to support just one serious



Grammy '96 on one disc

NEW RELEASES
TIRZAH AGASSI

What if God was one of us? Just a slob like one of us? Just a stranger on a bus? Trying to make his way home? Wonders Joan Osborne in "One Of Us," her offbeat, standout single featured in the collection 1996 Grammy Nominees (NMC). The sleepy-voiced Osbotne is the only artist on the album to be nominated in all three categories represented: Record of the Year, Song of the Year, and Best New Artist.

She is thus pitted against Mariah Carey, Michael Jackson, and Brandy, a heretical, white fringe rocker competing against black artists so middle-of-the-road that they seem to have become the voice of the silent majority. Relish is not yet being promoted in Israel, is the only white contender in the Best Record Category. Mariah Carey, whose predictable *Daydream* (NMC) is represented by the catchy, sentimental "One Sweet Day" sung in perfect harmony with Boyz II Men, seems to represent the Amer-I-Can way.

Meanwhile rapper Coolio's "Gangsta's Paradise" from the soundtrack to *Dangerous Minds* (Hed Arzi), with its Stevie Wonder sample and sardonic violins, is a powerful statement about the lives of those for whom the American dream sounds like a royal crock.

Coolio, by the way, is from Britain, as is Seal, whose Elizabethan madrigal "Kiss From A Rose" represents his eponymous second album.

The fifth contender, Atlanta girl group TLC's lovely, beat-driven "Waterfalls" from *CrazySexyCool* (Hed Arzi) is also a cautionary tale about surviving the mean streets.

For Song of the Year Osborne and Seal are joined by Michael Jackson singing "You Are Not

Alone" to a Lisa Marie Presley who has since died.

Meanwhile boy group All-4-One sings a '50s retro "I Can Love You Like That" and Alanis Morissette counters their sweet nothings with "You Oughta Know," a blistering rock reminder that "hell hath no fury like a woman scorned."

For Best New Artist Osborne and Morissette are joined in the outspoken woman department by Shania Twain whose *The Woman In Me* is also unknown in Israel. On "Any Man Of Mine" Twain, accompanied by country fiddles, spells out the New World Order: "Any man of mine better be proud of me! Even when I'm muddy still better love me! I can be late for a date, that's fine! But he better be on time."

Meanwhile teenage Brandy's eponymous debut (Hed Arzi) is represented by the smoothly produced, totally nonthreatening "Baby."

The only white males on the entire album are the soft-rock musicians backing the lead singer of Hootie & The Blowfish, a black man who wears his baseball cap with its visor forward in a Colin Powell-esque, armed forces veteran manner and sounds pleasantly color-free as he sings "Let Her Cry" from *Cracked Rear View* (Hed Arzi).

It's an exasperated, compassionate song by a man who loves a woman who insists on leading, but doesn't seem to know where she's going.

What do these choices by the music establishment of the world's only great superpower reflect about the values of 1996? Your guess is as good as mine. But I'll bet that somewhere up in white male heaven Bing Crosby is glad that he's not around to deal with it.



Atlanta-based girl group TLC is up for a major award with "Waterfalls" from *CrazySexyCool*.

Theater turned spectator sport

HELEN KAYE

Out with dull old Audience Participation. In with sexy Interactive Theater. (Past) same thing, different name.)

Playwright/director Dr. Dan Ronen doesn't want the audience sitting in its seats in the dark, passive as cabbages. Instead they should be active and involved, like those in Shakespeare's time.

"Audiences then were very active," says Ronen. "The asides in Shakespeare's plays were probably answers to shouts from the audience on the stage and in the pit, and then somebody subsequently wrote them into the prompt script."

It was the famous 18th-century actor/manager David Garrick "who threw the audience off the stage because they bothered him," Ronen continues, and it's been downhill ever since, "especially since [the invention of] TV, which does everything [for you], even laugh."

He did his doctorate on the experimental theater movements of the Sixties, one of whose aims was audience participation, but their efforts "had exactly the opposite effect because they tried to turn their audience into actors. What I'm trying to do is expand the audience's role as a spectator."

And the more the merrier. His comedy whodunit, *Rosh Meshuga* (the US title is *Shear Madness*), has spectators choosing which of four possible suspects is the murderer.

In the political satire *Miss Israel*, (written with Ephraim Sidon), the audience must elect one of six (male) candidates to the title.

This means the plays, respectively, have four and six different endings, depending on which the audience chooses.

The temporarily titled *Open*

Minds, which Ronen is still writing, is his most ambitious yet, because the audience will have to make a choice about every 10 minutes.

It will have to choose not only who the leading character (of four) will be, what kind of play (drama, tragedy, comedy or melodrama) they'll see, but also the play's development will depend on its choices.

Each play, contends Ronen, develops the audience a little more, but without scaring it off. And audiences respond.

The 1990 Cameri production of *Rosh Meshuga* ran for 350 performances. Ronen, who owns the Israeli rights, has just revived it in a commercial production with a new cast.

Miss Israel at the Jerusalem Khan is going strong, and his improvisational *Theater Games* are as popular today as when he started them at Tel Aviv Tzavva in 1969.

The audience's favorite in that one, Ronen says, is "Who Am I," in which the actress (Ronen's wife Etty Shiloni), leaves the stage.

The audience creates a character and a script for her "that's a dozen times more lurid and imaginative than the scriptwriters of *Raman Aviv Gimmel* ever dreamed up."

He wants to create an Interactive Center for the Arts where all the performing arts will create with audience participation in mind.

Meanwhile the first-ever Interactive Arts Festival is scheduled for the end of May. The program includes dance, jazz, theater games, and even an interactive opera.

And interactive Shakespeare? Certainly, Ronen says stoutly, but the audience has to be ready for it and it's not quite there yet.

Immigrant opera singer takes caravan route to success

When Marina Levitt's mother broke the news to her 19-year-old daughter that the family was emigrating from their native Lvov to Israel, Marina was less than thrilled.

"I cried a lot," the successful opera singer now reminisces in fluent, slang-filled Hebrew. "It was sort of ironic. My mother told me that we are moving for the benefit of my future, but I was happy, I really did not want to leave." Being initially settled in a caravan in the depressed southern development town of Ofakim didn't help matters.

Levitt had enjoyed the cultural riches of her birthplace in west-

ern Ukraine. "Lvov was a really Western city, culture wise. As a child I recall I had a subscription to a lecture series in the museum, where I learned much about art. I really loved Lvov. In school there I studied piano and conducting and then moved on to a music conservatory, where I began studying voice. I graduated cum laude and was accepted to the famous Gnessin Institute in Moscow. I thought my future was really bright, and then I realized: I must leave - all this behind."

She adds that as a Jew it was not easy to get accepted into the conservatory. "But once I was in, I was treated excellently."

Levitt's luck here changed when she entered the Rubin Music Academy at the Tel Aviv University, studying with Natanya Dovrat and Rafael Arie.

"From the time I was 10 years old I knew I wanted to be an opera singer. Now I really felt it was starting to happen."

Throughout her studies at the academy, Levitt performed with various local music ensembles, including the Rinat National Choir, where she was a soloist for three years.

Upon graduating, she went to New York, without benefit of a scholarship.

"I lived there with friends, took private lessons, and then I

formed numerous roles with the New Israeli Opera."

In fact, the nine roles she has sung with the New Israeli Opera since her 1989 debut as Mimmi in *La Boheme*, make her one of the most frequent performers with the company.

She has traveled abroad less since the birth seven months ago of her son Eli (pronounced Ilay). "I sang when I was pregnant, but I don't think it's wise to do auditions when you are eight months pregnant. Everyone told me that after the pregnancy my voice would change, that it would become darker. I was told that pregnancy does wonders for the voice, but it did nothing for

mine."

It was during the pregnancy that she made her New York debut singing the lead role in Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Tsar's Bride* with the Opera Orchestra of New York at Carnegie Hall. During that performance she shared the stage with another Israeli, mezzo-soprano Susanna Poretzky.

"We are both from Lvov, but I never met her there. However, it turned out that I went to school with Susanna's husband and I also knew her brother very well."

Now these two Lvov-born singers will reunite once again on the concert stage, singing

Vivaldi's *Gloria* and Rossini's *Stabat Mater* with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra under Mendel Rodan this Sunday and Tuesday.

After the IPO dates she will sing in Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in a special gala concert with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra on March 3 before traveling to Ireland to sing Pamina in *The Magic Flute*.

In between stage roles she enjoys most playing mom. "Eli is the greatest joy of my life. It's something that I wanted for so long. And I can tell he really loves music. The first thing he smiled to was music."

Old made new again under Maazel's baton

What really made this second concert of the Pittsburgh Symphony with Lorin Maazel so exciting was neither the virtuosity of the orchestra nor the brilliance of its brass section.

Rather, it was Maazel's interpretative originality which almost turned the performance of the two main items, both old warhorses - the Sibelius violin concerto and the "Eroica" - into first performances. It is a pity that Morton Gould's *Classical Variations on Colonial Themes* proved such a miserable curtain-raiser.

Sibelius's violin concerto is actually a symphony for violin and orchestra and Maazel treated it exactly as Sibelius probably imagined it.

The soloist, Julian Rachlin, collaborated joyfully with the conductor and probably shared Maazel's conception. Maazel allowed young Rachlin to display in full his restrained, noble and elegant solo line, bringing out the grandeur of orchestral statements, not as some kind of accompaniment but as sovereign orchestral deliberations.

Maazel integrated the two parts into the basic symphonic idea which lies at the heart of the whole composition. And, in a Paganini encore, Rachlin displayed fireworks and virtuoso acrobatics.

The "Eroica" was even more interesting.

The "allegro con brio," on which most conductors put great emphasis, emerged in Maazel's version as slightly aloof, mechanical and a little too quick.

But, though lacking some of the strength you expect from the first movement of the "Eroica," it seemed, in the "scherzo" there seemed a lull in tension, a breathing space, which led us, refreshed, to the last movement.

The last movement became the crowning peak and implemented in full Beethoven's poetic idea: intellectual heroism as the ultimate and most spiritual form of heroism, as personified by Prometheus.

The movement swelled and swelled, radiating finally in a blinding light.

Mann Auditorium, Tel Aviv, February 14
Benjamin Bar-Am

CONCERT ROUNDUP

THE Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Lorin Maazel, opened its tour with the local premiere of Ari Ben-Shabat's *Magrephah*, named after a musical instrument from the time of the Second Temple. Nobody knows how the instrument sounded, so the composer's imagination is at liberty to run wild.

And an imaginative work it is, especially in its abundant clashing and blending sonorities and varying tone colors, growing out of one long, draw-out single tone to which it eventually returns after many unpredictable developments, thus closing an eventual circle.

Everything about this orchestra is bright, sparkling, and alive. Maazel's brisk tempi injected into Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony a light, joyous drive forward, fresh and carefree yet never hurried.

Beyond this spirited way of playing, it was also transparent and polished to the smallest detail. Sibelius's Symphony No. 2 provided an opportunity for displaying the orchestra's glorious brass, powerful but also mellow and well-rounded.

Some naughtily flexible tempi in virtuosic renditions of a Brahms Hungarian Dance and Bizet's *L'Arlesienne* highlighted

THE TEMPTATION OF SAINT ANTHONY

By Maurice Maeterlinck. Hebrew, Gera Spidler. Direction, Mitko Buzakov. Set, Sista Lisitskaya. Costumes, Darya Lachovitzky. Lighting, Amir Brenner. Music, Effie Shoshani. Make-up, Eranmanel Menika. At Hasifriya Theater, Ramat Gan, Hebrew title, *Havonim shel Antonia Hakadosh*.

Virginia - Neomi Promovitch
Anthony - Ilan Miller
Gustav - Cheo Alon
Achille - Roy Sasson
Priest - Yaniv Sternfeld
Doctor - Udi Gil

FILIGREES No. 5, a new concertante for chamber orchestra by local composer Ben-Zion Orgad was premiered at the Sinfonietta Beersheba *Classica Six* series. The idiom is dissonant, yet tonal. Its convincing texture is constructed from contrapuntal interface between various "canonizing" melodic gestures.

Violinist Guy Braunstein was classic in presentation and stage manner.

He brought precision as well as attractive phrasing and pacing to Bruch's well-known violin concerto in G minor.

Stepping in for ill-disposed music director Ury Mayer, Sinfonietta laureate maestro Mendel Rodan found in Richard Strauss's rarely heard *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* suite (1918), a perfect vehicle for orchestral expression.

He brought out all the piquant neo-Baroque figuration and brilliance and the score's colorful, romantic registration of instruments.

Beersheba Conservatory, February 18
Max Stern

Viva España, via two stirring local flamenco artists

Flamenco glittered and flashed in both Tel Aviv and Jerusalem last week. Two Israeli women were, quite independently of each other, the cause.

Dalia Low, who lives and teaches in Tel Aviv, appeared at the Noga Theater in Tel Aviv (February 14, 15) and at the Henry Crown Hall of the Jerusalem Theater (February 17) with three outstanding Spanish guests and the Israel Chamber Orchestra. At the Rebecca Crown Auditorium of the Jerusalem Theater (February 13), Sharon Sagy, who lives and dances in Spain, was accompanied by a Spanish guitarist, an authentic flamenco singer and an Israeli super-flutist, Gilad Manor.

It is some time since Low danced here and she has never danced better. Always a beauti-

DANCE REVIEW
DORA SOWDEN

ful performer, this time she added a passionate quality to her elegance. In *El Amor Brujo* ("Love the Magician") she was partnered by Miguel Angel, a splendid dancer who performed with her here 10 years ago. With the participation of two other exceptional dancers - Rafael Franco and Cesar Parra - they made the old tale of witchery and exorcism come to life with only half the stage to dance on, the other half being occupied by the 40-strong Israel Chamber Orchestra conducted by Salvador Conde.

The only prop was a wooden stool, and only Low's expressive hands and arms evoked the fire in the famous music by Manuel de Falla.

Even by Flamenco standards, Low's costumes were remarkable. In a solo to Ravel's *Pavane for a Dead Child*, her excessively long-tailed gown almost stole the show.

Finally, the four dancers joined together again for Saint-Saens's *Havanaise* with first violinist Eila Shulman and alto Bracha Kol for outstanding performances. Local flamenco guitarist Miguel Skirplayed between the dances.

Sagy took the stage by storm with her *Zapateado* - heel-tapping at terrific speed. Altering the tempi, her virtuoso progress through the flamenco language and her stammina were astonishing.

Milking Maeterlinck's mystique

THE TEMPTATION OF SAINT ANTHONY

By Maurice Maeterlinck. Hebrew, Gera Spidler. Direction, Mitko Buzakov. Set, Sista Lisitskaya. Costumes, Darya Lachovitzky. Lighting, Amir Brenner. Music, Effie Shoshani. Make-up, Eranmanel Menika. At Hasifriya Theater, Ramat Gan, Hebrew title, *Havonim shel Antonia Hakadosh*.

Virginia - Neomi Promovitch
Anthony - Ilan Miller
Gustav - Cheo Alon
Achille - Roy Sasson
Priest - Yaniv Sternfeld
Doctor - Udi Gil

Vague, pale, suave images, a twilight world in which the characters are less dramatic personalities than disembodied broodings or longings," wrote critic Edmund Wilson of the plays of the Belgian symbolist poet and dramatist Maeterlinck (1862-1949).

Hasifriya's stage, draped in unearthly white, evokes the aura of this sinister limbo in a set that typifies the nightmare world of the Expressionist play.

In this excellent production, director Mitko Buzakov milks Maeterlinck's masque for its entertainment value as much as for its strange mystique. On the one hand the clash of bourgeois greed and materialism with pure spirituality and potent belief are

THEATER REVIEW
NAOMI DOUDAI

pointed in terms of confusion and fear. At the same time, the lesser figures in the drama are caricatured for comic relief.

Religious piety, personified by Neomi Promovitch as Virginia, the passionately pious maid, and Ilan Miller, as the remote, reclusive saint of the othe, are well performed in a sensitive duo of strikingly contrasted studies.

For the rest, Buzakov turns the antics of the bereaved family, the funeral rites, and subsequent resurrection of the old lady (Moriab Shlomi) into a farce.

This lends a satiric slant to the bizarre proceedings that makes Maeterlinck's exotic metaphysics more palatable to contemporary audiences.

The staging is superbly orchestrated, exploiting every weird moment with the fullest dramatic effect.

TOWER RECORDS' TOP 15

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEKS ON CHARTS	ARTIST	TITLE
#1	1	VARIOUS ARTISTS	RABIN - GOODBYE FRIEND
#2	3	MADONNA	SOMETHING TO REMEMBER
#3	2	NICK CAVE	MURDER BALLADS
#4	14	SVAN SHAVIT	IN THIS BLUE-GRAY LIGHT
#5	11	ABBA	GOLD - GREATEST HITS
#6	6	OASIS	MORNING GLORY
#7	8	YEHUDA POLKER	THE CHILD IN YOU
#8	RE 1	STING	BEST OF FIELDS OF GOLD
#9	5	SADE	BEST OF
#10	16	FILM SOUND TRACK	1492
#11	RE 1	BEE GEES	VERY BEST OF
#12	RE 1	FILM SOUND TRACK	PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
#13	RE 1	VARIOUS ARTISTS	300% PURE DANCE
#14	21	BJORK	POST
#15	10	VANGELIS	VOICES

Tower Records' top-selling albums for the previous week. RE - re-entry

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1996

Steinmetz family makes bid for Ampal

RACHEL NEIMAN

DIAMOND merchants Benny and Danny Steinmetz have made a bid to purchase 28.7 percent of Bank Hapoalim subsidiary Ampal for an estimated \$55 million.

Hapoalim yesterday officially announced it was entering negotiations with the Steinmetz family, following a board decision earlier this week.

Ampal American Israel Corporation, a company incorporated in the US whose shares are traded on Wall Street, invests in Israeli real estate, communications and industry.

Investments include DSP Group, Mercury Interactive, Teledata, Carmel Containers, Moriah Hotels, Industrial Buildings, Pri Ha'emek and Sonol operator Granite Hacarmel.

Bank Hapoalim currently owns 53.7% of Ampal and intends to reduce its holdings in the company to less than 25% in accordance with the Brodet Report, which recommended that the banks drastically reduce their non-financial holdings.

The bank began reorganization procedures in January and expects to complete its division by 1998 into four parts - households and general, private banking, business and conglomerates.

As part of reorganization, Hapoalim is to reduce holdings in non-financial activities as recommended by the Brodet Report.

Hapoalim has reportedly been in negotiation with other groups, including Shamrock and a consortium headed by Ted Arison of the Claridge group.

Indian court ruling good news for Bezeq

JUDY SIEGEL and news agencies

THE Indian Supreme Court yesterday dismissed a set of petitions challenging foreign investors bids for parts of the sub-continent's potentially lucrative telecommunications market.

This paves the way for multi-million dollar deals involving an assortment of companies, among whom Bezeq figures prominently.

Bezeq had received no official notice to this effect as of last night, but it did inform the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange based on the wire report it received through *The Jerusalem Post*.

Bezeq owns 26 percent of HFCL-Bezeq Telecom.

Its partners include Himachal Futuristic Telecommunications (HFCL), with 44%; Thailand's Shinwatra, with 15%; and India's Kotak Mahindra Finance, with 15%.

The consortium has won the right to install conventional telephone infrastructure in three large Indian districts and a cellular phone system in another district.

A Bezeq spokesman said he expected a copy of the ruling would

be received in three or four days. Before reaching the court, the privatization program was well on its way to completion.

It was approved by the government of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in 1994 and got started last year.

It won broad public support in a country where fewer than one resident in 100 has a phone line. The state-owned telecommunications monopoly was unable to cope with the demand.

However, opposition elements led to Islam challenged the public tender that selected foreign investors to rebuild the telecommunications infrastructure, and were especially annoyed by Israel's involvement.

According to Reuters, India's Communications Minister Sukh Ram declared his stand was "vindicated" by the court decision. "Today's decision should be very good news, not only for Japanese

investors but also for others who are entering India," said Hiroo Shinozuka, managing director of National Panasonic, who is launching a cellular phone system in New Delhi.

Opponents to privatization presented 10 different legal petitions claiming that the tendering process had been flawed, with no regulator to supervise competition. They also said the existence of foreign companies would endanger security by exposing telephone infrastructure to outside control.

HFCL-Bezeq Telecom had been the top bidder in nine of the nation's 20 regions by offering \$25 billion in license fees for the project - \$15b. more than the others combined.

The deal could mean \$250 million for Bezeq.

The Indian government still must get through the upper house of parliament a bill approving the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India to supervise telephone companies. This bill could be defeated, as opposition parties have the majority in the house.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Bezeq campaign net 22,000 new phone lines: More than 22,000 new phone lines were ordered from Bezeq during a special two-week campaign that ended last week; compared with an average of 3,500 orders during an ordinary two-week period.

Bezeq charged only NIS 295 for the installation of an additional line - about half the regular fee; the only condition was that the subscriber already has a phone line.

By the end of the year, the company aims at reaching a rate of 50 phone lines per 100 residents; today, it stands at 42 per 100.

Judy Siegel

Electra Consumer Goods has acquired a German agent for DM 4.8m. via Electra's French subsidiary Ace. The new Frankfurt-based subsidiary, Ace KlimaTechnic, markets Electra goods under the brand name Airwell.

Electra said annual turnover last year for the German agent was DM 15m., primarily from Airwell air conditioners. Electra intends to establish a chain of Ace KlimaTechnic stores in major German cities.

Rachel Neiman

Elron will invest \$2m. in Omnitics Technologies in return for 20 percent outstanding capital share, plus options to invest an additional \$2m. in order to increase its ownership in the company to 33.3%.

Omnitics Technologies is based in San Jose, California, with research and development facilities here and a marketing subsidiary in Munich. The company specializes in CD management for company and organization-wide communications networks. CDs are used by organizations to store data bases.

Rachel Neiman

Loan guarantees approved to finance IAI project for Turks

EVELYN GORDON

THE Knesset Finance Committee yesterday approved \$410 million in loan guarantees to finance an Israel Aircraft Industries project for the Turkish Defense Ministry.

The project requires IAI to refurbish and upgrade 54 F-15 fighter planes for the Turkish Air Force, at a cost of some \$650 million.

The deal will be financed entirely by loans from Israeli banks, which Turkey is to repay within five years after a two-year grace period.

This deal exposes the banks to risk twice over - the risk of a Turkish default and the risk that IAI will fail to complete the project.

However, the Israel Foreign Trade Risks Insurance Company (IFTRIC) cannot insure a deal this big.



Israel-Morocco Trade and Industry Bureau president Shaul Ben-Simhon (center) introduces Deputy Foreign Minister Eli Dayan (left) to visiting Moroccan businessman Isaac Marciano during yesterday's opening of the bureau in Tel Aviv. Dayan said Israel would provide Morocco with humanitarian aid to help overcome damage from floods there during January. Ben-Simhon said 17 Israeli companies are currently operating in Morocco, working with local businessmen or independently, and that Israeli exports to Morocco today totaled some \$50 million worth of goods, which could grow to \$60m., with an overall potential of \$350m.

(Hanoch Grizicky/Israel Sun)

Frenkel: No evidence of banks' wrongdoing toward kibbutzim

JERUSALEM POST STAFF

THE Bank of Israel has yet to find evidence of any wrongdoing on the part of an individual bank handling the kibbutzim's debts, Governor Jacob Frenkel said yesterday.

In a wide-ranging discussion of major macro-economic issues - particularly the battle against inflation, the current account and trade deficits, the privatization process and foreign currency reform - Frenkel also said that reopening the discussion over the kibbutzim's debts would be unjustified procedurally and potentially detrimental economically.

Insinuating that the election season has influenced some of the media fanfare surrounding the Procaccia Report - which has not been published but is known to allege that the banks over-inflated

multi-million-dollar debts - Frenkel said the kibbutzim should remember a re-examination of their debts might also entail a reconsideration of the write-off deals they and the banks reached earlier this decade.

An individual kibbutz might have reason - and certainly the right - to take its creditor to court, but the central bank has not received a single document which gives it reason to suspect any systematic wrongdoing by the banks concerning the kibbutzim debts, he said.

Regarding inflation, Frenkel called on the government to officially adopt a long-term policy which would aim at a three percent annual inflation rate. This, he said, would

provide the stability which is essential for the business community's durable growth.

As for the current account deficit, Frenkel said an administrative devaluation of the shekel - as has long been demanded by some industrialists - would be tantamount to abolishing price increases by "declaring zero inflation."

He called on exporters, some of whom have been investing energies in a battle for a cheaper shekel, to focus on cost cutting so that balance sheets would reflect monetary realities, and not the other way around.

Regarding privatization, Frenkel said that while he found the government's stated policy sound, he nevertheless thought the pace of its implementation was unacceptably slow.

Orbotech reports increase in 4rth quarter, annual net profits

RACHEL NEIMAN

ORBOTECH has announced a 39 percent rise in fourth quarter net profit to \$3.72 million from \$2.68m. during the same period in 1994.

Quarterly revenues went up to \$34.9m. from \$32.49m., while earnings per share rose to \$0.29 from \$0.22.

Annual net profits jumped to

\$15m. from \$9.2m. in 1994. Revenues went up to \$129.45m. from \$117.95m.

Earnings per share went up to \$1.17 from \$0.74.

The company said financial results reflected strong demand for

its PCB AOI products.

These products registered an 18% rise in sales in the quarter and 30% during the year.

Sales to the Pacific region grew 58%.

In the fourth quarter, Orbotech introduced an automated optical inspection system for LCD flat panels.

Apple, Motorola set Mac OS license pact

SAN FRANCISCO (Reuters) - Apple Computer Inc., struggling to rebound in a fiercely competitive market, said yesterday it has licensed its vaunted Macintosh operating system to Motorola Inc. in its broadest such agreement yet.

The deal enables Schaumburg, Illinois-based Motorola to license and also sub-license the software to other computer makers.

Motorola's Computer Group will license the Mac operating system for its computer systems designed around the PowerPC chip, adding a popular consumer-oriented operating system to its computers, which currently only offer higher-end software.

Motorola will also be able to sub-license the Mac system to other computer manufacturers to which it sells motherboards - the core circuit board of a computer - or computer systems that can run the Mac operating system.

The move comes as Apple, under its new chief executive Gilbert Amelio, is trying to cut expenses and turn its troubled computer operations around in the face of increasing competition at home and abroad.

Apple lost \$69 million in the quarter ended in December and expects to post an even larger loss in the current quarter, in part due to the effects of customer uncertainty in recent weeks over whether the company would remain independent or not amid widely reported merger talks, and a continued decline in its profit margins.

Apple said it expects Motorola will be able to grow the Macintosh operating system platform by enabling computer makers supplied by Motorola with motherboards to sell a Macintosh-compatible computer without signing a licensing pact directly with Apple.

Amelio, Apple's newly appointed chairman and chief executive, told reporters on a conference call that the pact represents the beginning of a second and more aggressive phase of Apple's licensing program.

"We feel the best way to evangelize it... is through this kind of a program," Amelio said.

Amelio said the licensing talks with Motorola were well underway when he took over at Cupertino, California-based Apple on February 2, when former Chief Executive Michael Spindler was ousted by the company's board.

Joseph Guglielmi, a vice president at Motorola and general manager of its Computer Products Group, said Motorola was in active talks with several potential licensees, but he declined to be more specific.

"It speaks very highly of Apple and their commitment to the open

platform that they have allowed us to sublicense it," Guglielmi said. He also said the deal was a great opportunity to further the PowerPC alliance.

The now-struggling PowerPC alliance was formed by Apple, International Business Machines Corp., and Motorola almost five years ago to develop another chip architecture that would rival the dominance of the Intel Corp. architecture.

Apple has so far been the biggest volume seller of systems with its Power Macintoshes that use the PowerPC chip.

Motorola develops systems and motherboards that it retails to other computer makers with the PowerPC chip. Motorola's systems currently run Microsoft Corp.'s NT and IBM's version of UNIX - AIX - used mostly in high-end workstations and network servers.

New tax brackets

AS a result of the semi-annual cost of living wage adjustment of 2.4 percent that will be reflected in February paychecks, the Treasury has updated tax brackets and tax credit points by 2.3% as follows. The adjustment will result in a net monthly salary increase of between NIS 60-135. Jennifer Friedlin

Tax rate	January '96	February '96
15%	up to 3,020	up to 3,060
30%	3,021 - 7,950	3,081 - 8,110
45%	7,951 - 14,400	8,111 - 14,960
50%	14,401 and above	14,961 and above

Tax credit point	January '96	February '96
Single	1,950	1,995
Working woman	2,438	2,583
Married with wife not working	2,817	2,882
Woman with one child	3,315	3,303

AGAN, Makhteshim to buy stake in Herbitechnica

AGAN Chemicals and Makhteshim Chemical Works announced yesterday they will purchase a 49 percent stake in Herbitechnica, a Brazilian pesticide distributorship, for \$20 million.

Makhteshim owns 47 of Agan's outstanding capital share. Herbitechnica's turnover in 1995 was \$60 million, with turnover this year expected to increase to \$80m.

Through subsidiaries, Agan and Makhteshim will purchase 49% of the distributorship, in equal

RACHEL NEIMAN

parts, from its present shareholders in return for a \$20m. cash payment.

If 1995-1996 profits rise more than \$12m. the partners will pay an additional sum of not more than \$2.45m.

If Herbitechnica's net profits between 1995-1999 rise above \$61.5m., the partners will pay out an additional sum of not more than \$7.35m.

Agan and Makhteshim will have the option to purchase up to 60% of the distributorship in the year 2001. If cumulative net profits in the years 1995-1999 are less than \$25m., the options will be handed over without payment.

If net profits rise above \$25m., the partners will pay the Brazilian company a sum to be determined based on shareholder's equity as of December 31, 1999.

Separate debt deal possible for UKM, Kibbutz Ha'artzi

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

THE banks and Treasury will sign a separate debt arrangement with Kibbutz Ha'artzi and United Kibbutz Movement (UKM) if Kibbutz Ha'artzi continues to delay the signing of the agreement, according to sources in the UKM.

The Kibbutzim, Treasury and banks will begin marathon talks this morning in an attempt to sign the kibbutz debt arrangement by the end

of the month.

Sources in UKM said it is ready to sign the supplementary arrangement.

However, Kibbutz Ha'artzi, has claims against the Treasury and banks which have not been resolved and are likely to delay the imple-

mentation of the arrangement.

The UKM emphasized that it is interested in signing the debt arrangement as soon as possible out of fear that the findings of the Procaccia Report, which suggest the kibbutzim's debts to the banks were inflated, may lead to its

debt.

A UKM spokesman said the movement does not object to individual kibbutzim checking their debts, adding that the movement will consider how, and if, to help these kibbutzim at a meeting next week.

The kibbutz debt agreement involves write-offs totaling about NIS 6 billion for 127 kibbutzim.

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ISRAEL DISCOUNT BANK

ISRAEL MONEY MARKETS

Patrol (foreign currency deposit rates) (20.2.96)

Currency (deposit term)	3 MONTHS	6 MONTHS	12 MONTHS
U.S. dollar (\$250,000)	4.375	4.250	4.250
Pound sterling (£100,000)	4.768	4.398	4.250
German mark (DM 200,000)	4.918	4.691	4.250
Swiss franc (SF 200,000)	4.918	4.691	4.250
Yen (10 million yen)	4.918	4.691	4.250

(Rates vary higher or lower than indicated according to deposit)

Shekel Foreign Exchange Rates* (19.2.96)

Currency basket	Buy	Sell	Banknotes	Buy	Sell
U.S. dollar	3.4019	3.2488	4.375	4.250	4.250
German mark	2.1218	2.1981	4.375	4.250	4.250
Pound sterling	4.7688	4.3988	4.375	4.250	4.250
French franc	0.0181	0.0201	4.375	4.250	4.250
Japanese yen (100)	2.9287	2.9790	4.375	4.250	4.250
Dutch florin	1.9850	1.9858	4.375	4.250	4.250
Swiss franc	2.8103	2.8258	4.375	4.250	4.250
Swedish krona	0.4465	0.4638	4.375	4.250	4.250
Norwegian krona	0.4951	0.4930	4.375	4.250	4.250
Danish krone	0.5769	0.5778	4.375	4.250	4.250
Finland mark	2.2189	2.2543	4.375	4.250	4.250
Australian dollar	0.7913	0.8041	4.375	4.250	4.250
S. African rand	1.2918	1.0483	4.375	4.250	4.250
Belgian franc (10)	3.0188	3.0898	4.375	4.250	4.250
Austrian schilling (10)	1.5828	1.5709	4.375	4.250	4.250
Italian lire (1000)	3.3632	3.9428	4.375	4.250	4.250
Portuguese escudo	4.8018	4.8810	4.375	4.250	4.250
Irish punt	2.5127	2.5833	4.375	4.250	4.250
Spanish peseta (100)			4.375	4.250	4.250

* These rates vary according to bank. ** Bank of Israel.

SOURCE: BANK LEUMI



Japan trade surplus with US lowest in 12 years

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan's trade surplus with the United States fell to its lowest level for 12 years in January, perhaps the best present Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto could give President Bill Clinton ahead of their summit this week.

The Finance Ministry said on Monday that Japan's customs-cleared surplus with the US dropped to \$1.55 billion in January, from \$3.196 billion in December, a year earlier. It was the smallest surplus since January 1984, when \$1.26 billion was posted.

The overall surplus also fell sharply, becoming a fraction of its former self at \$467.08 million from a revised figure of \$2.75 billion for a year earlier. It was the seventh consecutive month the overall surplus had declined.

Japan's hefty trade surpluses have often been a source of tension with its major trading partners, and the US has been the

most vocal in its demands for structural change.

That change has come, analysts say.

"We've obviously seen a structural break in terms of imports. Imports are finding it much easier to come into the Japanese economy," said Jason James, a strategist at James Capel Pacific.

Analysts said that while surpluses were usually small in January because New Year holidays tended to cap exports, this year's surplus was even smaller than last year, when exports were battered by the Kobe earthquake.

"We can see the effect of the last June's car trade pact between Japan and the United States," said Kyohei Morita, an economist at Nomura Research Institute.

The pact, which followed bitter wrangling between the countries, saw Japan promise to make more efforts to open its market and

Japanese car makers agree to increase output overseas. Vehicle exports were down 11.5 percent in January from a year earlier while imports jumped a huge 38.4%.

Although January's trade surplus plunge was certain to help create a cordial meeting between Hashimoto and Clinton in Santa Monica, California, on Friday, it would probably not dispel all trade tensions, analysts say.

"The general skepticism about the export dependency of the Japanese economy is going to linger," said Shunsuke Motani, senior economist at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell.

While specific trade issues are not on the agenda for the meeting, the two are still at odds over the photographic film, air cargo, insurance and semi-conductor sectors.

However, the outlook is for further declines in the surplus, at

least for the time being.

"There's no change in overall direction," said Nomura Research's Morita, who said he expected another significant drop for February.

Some also predicted the rate of import growth would continue to rise, citing a cyclical upturn in the economy. "It's going to accelerate from here on. We have a gradually strengthening Japanese economy, albeit still not extremely strong, and we have the rest of the world tending to slow down a bit," said James.

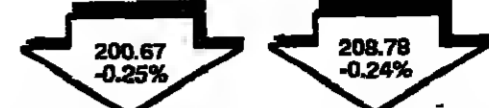
But Morita disagreed, saying that although strong demand for semiconductors and computers would keep imports high, the rate of growth was unlikely to increase all that much.

"The recovery is not one extending to every sector. Consumers might be buying a computer but this probably means they are not buying something else."

Fear of hike in rates pushes indexes lower

TEL AVIV STOCK MARKET

FELICE MARANZ



Two-Sided Index

INDEXES fell for a second day yesterday amid concern that the Bank of Israel will raise interest rates.

"The market expects increasing rates," said Arye Maoz, vice president at the Tel Aviv firm Central Securities. "This pessimism, this fear, is generating tension in the market."

The Bank of Israel last increased rates on February 1, when the rate at which it lends to banks rose to 14 percent from 13.7%.

"Wall Street has become an increasingly important factor in Tel Aviv," added Maoz. "Presidents Day [in the US] means no Wall Street activity."

The Maof index fell 0.24 percent to 208.78, and the Two-Sided index decreased 0.25% to 200.67. Of 998 issues trading across the exchange, nearly twice as many shares fell as rose for a second day.

Almost NIS 60 million worth of shares traded, NIS 10.8m. below Sunday's level and about half the average trading last month.

Offsetting losses, state-controlled phone company Bezeq rose 1% after India's Supreme Court ruled in favor of the government's decision to issue licenses for basic telephone services.

The court decision paves the way for Bezeq's participation in providing phone services in three regions in India.

Other gaining shares included Clal Industries Ltd., which rose 0.25%. Clal said it was negotiating to buy a 50% stake in the dairy business owned by kibbutz Yotifata for NIS 100m.

The purchase, said Maoz, "will be good for Clal Industries; they

Maof index

will be expanding in the profitable food industry."

Clal Industries' parent company, holding company Clal (Israel) Ltd., fell 0.5%.

Bank Hapoalim closed unchanged after announcing it was negotiating with Benay and Danny Steinmetz to sell a 25% stake in Ampal-American Israel Corp., an Israeli investment company traded in New York.

The bank would not specify the transaction's value, saying in a statement that it would be "higher than the market value."

Ampal's share's closed at 6% on Friday, unchanged from Thursday.

Bank Hapoalim currently holds 53.7% of Ampal, it said.

Chemical shares rose after Maktshemim Chemical Works Ltd. and Agan Chemical Manufacturers Ltd. announced they had jointly purchased a 49 percent stake in Herbitechoica, a Brazilian pesticide company, for \$20m. in a bid to expand their business in South America.

Maktshemim rose 0.75%, Agan went up 0.5% and Israel Chemicals rose 0.5%.

Koor Industries owns 65 percent of Maktshemim, and Maktshemim owns 47% of Agan.

Shares in Koor closed unchanged. So did Teva Pharmaceuticals Ltd.; Israel Corp.; Dead Sea Works; and both IDB Holding Corp. and IDB Development Corp.

Declining shares included Osem investment Ltd., which fell for a second day, losing 1.25%. Bank Leumi Le-Israeli BM fell 1.5%; Clal Electroic Industries fell 3%; and Tadiqan, a Koor subsidiary, fell 1.75%. (Bloomberg)

London tourist chiefs hope bomb won't hit trade

LONDON (Reuters) - British tourist chiefs put on a brave face yesterday, saying they hoped the second fatal IRA bomb blast to hit London in nine days would not damage the country's multi-billion-pound tourist industry.

But some of the tourists caught in Sunday night's blast in the heart of London's theatreland said they would be heading home and not returning to Britain until the violence ends.

"Terrorism has not yet had a major effect on tourism to Britain. Visitor numbers have increased steadily over the years, affected only by major international conflicts like the Gulf War," said Anthony Sell, head of the British Tourist Authority.

"Economic factors such as exchange rates... are more likely to affect tourism trends, which at the time look very positive for Britain," Sell said in a statement.

However, tourists shocked by

Sunday's blast voiced concern over the safety of London.

An American woman, clearly shaken by the experience, said: "We only came for a weekend. It's my first time in London. I won't be coming back until things have quieted down."

Mark Johnson, 25, a Canadian law student who was drinking up in a bar just opposite the blast, said he was "scared and frightened" and would cut short his visit to London.

At least one person was killed on Sunday when an Irish Republican Army bomb destroyed a red, double-decker passenger bus, a symbol of London tourism.

A huge IRA bomb in east London killed two people on February 9, ending a 17-month guerrilla cease-fire, and a bomb left in a telephone booth in the theatre district last Thursday was defused.

London is the jewel in the

same effect as the 1991 Gulf War, which cut tourism worldwide.

"We think we will be all right this year because people from the US and Far East markets come as part of package tours which are booked far ahead," Robertson said. "But some Europeans may decide to stay away this summer."

The scene of Sunday's explosion lies near the heart of the capital's entertainment center at Covent Garden, home to hundreds of leading theaters, hotels and restaurants.

Traders said that investors feared further bomb blasts could disrupt tourism but that direct evidence of a downturn was needed before such share price falls were justified.

Tourist officials fear the blasts could especially deter big spenders such as Americans and Japanese.

Diane Robertson of Madame Tussauds' waxworks, London's most popular tourist attraction, said the attacks would not have

Key Representative Rates

US dollar	NIS 3.0960	-0.32%
Sterling	NIS 4.7957	+0.26%
Mark	NIS 2.1426	+1.33%

INFLATION MARKETS

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Eight insurance firms face indictment

EVELYN GORDON

The companies committed these illegal acts in four sectors, the draft indictment says: car insurance, homeowners' insurance, corporate insurance, and insurance for mechanical equipment.

According to the indictment, the cartel arrangement was implemented in a number of ways, such as special contracts with secondary insurers to enforce uniform prices and coordinating rates before submitting requests for approval to the supervisor of insurance.

Before the indictment is filed in court, however, the suspects will have a chance to try to change Ben-Yair's mind. He has written to all of the accused to invite them to submit their arguments against the indictment in writing, and officially they have a month to do so. In practice, however, the process will probably take longer, since the companies will first

need to examine the evidence against them.

The 15 executives named in the draft indictment, according to their titles at the time the alleged crimes were committed, are Itamar Borovich, managing director of Phoenix; Uzi Levy, managing director of Migdal; Gidon Rosolio, deputy managing director of Migdal; Rimon Ben-Shaul, managing director of Clal; Ya'acov Kibiel, deputy managing director of Clal; Meir Shani, managing director of Hamagen; Amichai Harari, head of Hamagen's elementary insurance division; Levy Rahmani, managing director of Ayalon; Noga Rahmani, deputy managing director of Ayalon; Shabtai Angel, managing director of Menorah; Ari Kalman, head of Menorah's general insurance division; Avraham Taiber, managing director of Zion; Uri Taiber, head of Zion's general insurance division; Menachem Harpaz, managing director of Sahar; and Eli Azuvel.



Religious Affairs Minister Shimon Shetreet embraces Metropolitan Timothy, secretary to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate during yesterday's gathering in Tel Aviv on 'Jerusalem as a Tourist Center in Peacetime.' Shetreet outlined preparations for the wave of Christian tourists expected here to mark the year 2000. (Gidon Markovitz)

WEATHER

Jerusalem	8-15
Beersheva	7-19
Haifa	8-18
Tel Aviv	8-18
Samaris	6-15
Thessalon	8-19
Alula	8-18
Dead Sea	13-23
Galilee	4-13

Forecast: Generally fair, chance of scattered showers till noon, mainly in the north.

PFLP: Malki is no longer our man

LAMIA LAHOUD

The spokesman for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in Damascus announced on radio Monte Carlo Sunday that local PFLP spokesman Riad Malki no longer represents the party, since he expresses views which do not reflect its position.

Malki, a university professor from Ramallah, said the PFLP did not inform him and he only learned about the decision through the media.

He said the decision was a punishment for his statements criticizing the party's decision to boycott the Palestinian elections and his call for more democracy within the party.

Malki said many of local PFLP activists and some of its leaders abroad favored participation in the elections. Many PFLP activists voted in the election, especially in Gaza, despite the boycott call, he said.

He said many local activists are dissatisfied that the Damascus-based leadership keeps ignoring their positions, although the PFLP decided in 1994 that the main emphasis should be placed on the territories and more decision-making powers should be transferred to the local leadership.

Malki denies having misrepresented the party's position. He said the PFLP leadership falsely claims he leaked to the media reports that party leader George Habash will return, and accuses him of saying that the return of the PFLP members is linked to the convening of the Palestine National Council to amend the Palestinian Covenant.

Malki has said that he does not believe that Habash will return.

NEWS IN BRIEF

- Agency to weigh loan payback exemptions**
The Jewish Agency's Board of Governors, which convened yesterday in Jerusalem, has agreed to set up a special committee to look into the possibility of exemptions for needy immigrants who have to return absorption loans.
- Decision came after a vigil held outside the Agency's buildings yesterday in Jerusalem by some 100 members of the Zionist Forum. They were joined by demonstrators on behalf of the Imcha (Single Parents) and Kav Yashir (Single Immigrants) groups.**
- Piamenta to get Israel Prize**
The Israel Prize in Middle Eastern Studies will be awarded this year to retired Hebrew University Prof. Moshe Piamenta, Minister of the Arts Shulamit Aloni announced yesterday. She cited Piamenta's contributions in research on modern Arabic language, and his work on the use of Arabic among the Jewish population in Israel.
- Parolee sentenced for crippling girlfriend**
Ronan Atlas, 23, of Haifa, a prisoner on parole who shot and permanently paralyzed his girlfriend after his father said she was dressed immodestly, was sentenced to seven years and two months in jail yesterday.
- Netanya man gets 10 years for rape, sodomy**
Michael Hundhashvili, 35, of Netanya was sentenced yesterday to 10 years in prison and given a two-year suspended sentence for raping and sodomizing a 15-year-old girl for whom he promised to find work.
- Cabbie robbed at knifepoint**
A Jerusalem cabbie was robbed at knifepoint by two passengers yesterday. The two asked to be taken to Mishor Adumim. On the way, one pulled a knife, then ordered the cabbie to drive along the Alon Highway in the Jordan Valley. There, they attacked him, stole his money, and fled. The cabbie was lightly injured.
- Man gets five years for raping daughter**
A 78-year-old Jerusalem man was sentenced yesterday to five years in prison after confessing in Jerusalem District Court to raping his daughter, now 15, from the time she was in fourth grade until she was 14.

Deplorable conditions at five police lock-ups

EVELYN GORDON

CONDITIONS in police lock-ups are inhumane, and the Internal Security Ministry is not doing enough to improve the situation, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) said yesterday in a report submitted to Internal Security Minister Moshe Shahal.

The report was compiled after ACRI staffers examined five lock-ups. In Petah Tikva, Rehovot, Kfar Saba, Ramle and Lod. The organization found that all five suffered from severe overcrowding, filth, and other physical problems. It also found that it was difficult for prisoners to meet with their families or attorneys.

Following is a summary of the findings:

Petah Tikva: 70% of the prisoners should have been in a prison rather than a lock-up. Six prisoners were sleeping in a 3 sq.m. cell, without even space to walk between the beds. There was no ventilation in the cells, which were stifling. In the new wing, prisoners were not allowed out for exercise at all. Prisoners whom the police feared might try to commit suicide were kept three to a special 1 sq.m. cell, where the duty officer could keep an eye on them. The cell had no sink or toilet, and two prisoners had to sit on

a bench while the third slept on a mattress underneath.

Rehovot: 95% of the prisoners should have been in prison rather than a lock-up. Prisoners complained of rats and cockroaches in the cells. The shower had no cold water, and its walls were black with mold. Arabs from the territories charged with being in Israel illegally were kept in the courtyard for lack of space indoors.

Kfar Saba: Toilets were not properly walled off from the rest of the cell. There were no electricity outlets or garbage pails. Ventilation was poor.

Ramle: Ventilation was so poor that prisoners said they would deliberately injure themselves in the summer to escape the stifling heat of the cells by being sent to the hospital. Prisoners slept on blankets on the floors, because there were not enough mattresses. A police officer told ACRI that "the only difference between an Israeli prisoner and one in Thailand is the lack of a shackle on his leg."

Lod: One of the cells had been without light for 15 days - according to the prisoners,

because a burnt-out lightbulb was not replaced. The police charged that the prisoners had broken the bulb on purpose. There had been no hot water for a week because of a broken boiler. Prisoners complained of blockages in the toilets which caused flooding in the cells.

In response to ACRI's findings, several of the police officers responsible said they had made changes. In Ramle, for instance, the police said more mattresses were procured, and in Lod, ACRI was told the boiler and toilets were being repaired. In Petah Tikva, the police said they renovated the cells and put in ventilation, and began taking all the prisoners out for daily exercise. The police there said they were also trying to get a cell with a closed-circuit camera for suicidal prisoners, to replace the current arrangement.

However, ACRI said, not enough is being done.

"The inhumane conditions which prisoners face every day in these lock-ups cry out to heaven for urgent intervention [on the part of the ministry] to improve the situation," the association said in a press statement.

AROUND THE WORLD

Location	Low	High	Wind	Cloud
Alexandria	18	22	SE 10	partly cloudy
Buenos Aires	12	18	SE 10	partly cloudy
Cairo	18	22	SE 10	partly cloudy
Copenhagen	8	12	SE 10	partly cloudy
Helsinki	8	12	SE 10	partly cloudy
London	10	14	SE 10	partly cloudy
Los Angeles	18	22	SE 10	partly cloudy
Moscow	8	12	SE 10	partly cloudy
New York	18	22	SE 10	partly cloudy
Paris	12	18	SE 10	partly cloudy
Rome	12	18	SE 10	partly cloudy
Sydney	18	22	SE 10	partly cloudy
Tokyo	12	18	SE 10	partly cloudy
Vienna	12	18	SE 10	partly cloudy
Zurich	12	18	SE 10	partly cloudy

Winning cards

In yesterday's Mifal Hapayis daily Chance card draw, the lucky cards were the queen of spades, ace of hearts, 10 of diamonds, and queen of clubs.

'No room for Jerusalem visitors in year 2000'

HAIM SHAPIRO

THERE will be no room at the inn, no room on the buses and no room at the tourist sites by the year 2000, when millions of Christian visitors are expected to come mark the end of the second millennium of Christianity, according to Tourism Ministry Director-General Eli Gonen.

Gonen predicted that Israel would become a tourism bottleneck, perhaps even before 2000. He said that within a few years there will not be enough hotel rooms, the roads will be jammed and facilities at Ben-Gurion Airport will be inadequate to handle the crowds.

Gonen was speaking at a gathering of the Economic Forum panel on Jerusalem as a Tourist Center in Peacetime.

Moshe Hananel, director of Galilee Tours, noted that crowding has already curtailed some sites. Passengers from cruise ships visiting Jerusalem no longer enter the Tomb of Jesus in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher because they do not have the time to wait, he pointed out. Often, he added, the main consideration for where a tour bus stops is whether the site has good toilets.

Meanwhile, even if there are enough hotel rooms, not everyone who wants to visit may be able to afford them. Ministry Deputy Director-General Shabtai Shuhai said that the main thrust for hotel building for the future would be in four-and five-star hotels, with some three-star establishments and virtually no building of one- and two-star facilities.

"We are going for the money," Shuhai said, noting that Israel's tourism costs are far higher than other destinations such as Turkey or Spain, and therefore the country had to attract tourists who could afford to spend more.

Ramon set to approve building of Jerusalem's Har Homa

INTERIOR Minister Haim Ramon yesterday announced he would approve the building of 6,500 housing units in the planned new Har Homa neighborhood in Jerusalem.

The plans were approved in the district planning and construction committee several months ago and were passed on to Ramon for approval.

During a tour of the city with Mayor Ehud Olmert, Ramon said

that he thinks the Palestinians will not oppose the construction because the land expropriated for it was largely Jewish-owned.

The plan stirred anger among Jerusalem Arabs. The area where the neighborhood is to be built is on the border between Jerusalem and Bethlehem and between three Arab villages. It had previously been classified a "green area."

Jerusalem Arabs claimed that if the area was to be used for build-

ing, it should be used for Arab housing. Faisal Hussein said Palestinians would demonstrate at the site and try to prevent the constructions, as they did at Givat Hadagan near Efrat.

The future of a major section of the land slated for the construction is currently being discussed in the High Court of Justice, after several petitions were filed against the proposed construction. (Tim)

Levinger turned back at prison due to clerical error

HERB KEINON

AUTHORITIES at Ayalon Prison in Ramle turned away Rabbi Moshe Levinger last night because he did not have the proper orders from the court, after he showed up to begin serving a seven-month sentence for rioting and disturbing the peace in Hebron four years ago.

"I said I was going to break in, but was told this would not be advisable," Levinger said on his way back from the prison to Hebron, where he said he will await further instructions.

Earlier in the day Levinger, with his family and supporters, went to the Western Wall for "farewell prayers."

Levinger's son, Malachi said that sending his father to jail is absurd: "Arabs who attack and almost kill Jews are let off, while my father, who shot in the air in self-defense, is sent to prison. It is ridiculous."

Miriam Levinger, the rabbi's wife, is scheduled to begin serving a three-month sentence in 45 days for attacking police and impeding their work in a 1994 incident in Hebron.

The Hebron settlement committee issued a statement saying, "The government is releasing thousands of terrorists... Those who are merciful to the cruel, will eventually be cruel to the merciful. But in the end, the truth will win out."

Basketball players fail lie-detector tests

SOME local basketball professionals have failed voluntary lie-detector tests they initiated regarding betting on and throwing games that they were involved in.

Kobi Rabin, who runs a private company in Tel Aviv that administers such tests, said a few players were found lying when they answered no to the question: "Have you bet on a game or been involved in throwing one you were involved in?" He added that the same players had asked that the test results be destroyed, and he complied.

Rabin confirmed an Army Radio report that said that players, coaches and team officials are undergoing lie-detector tests in the offices of private companies to check how they would perform if summoned

by police to take such a test regarding gambling.

The requests to undergo the tests are part of what is known as "testing," a technical term referring to an attempt by individuals to see if they could "foot" the polygraph machine. Police Investigations Chief Cmdr. Yossi Levy said he knew of the matter, and would be contacting the private firms involved in the next few days.

The Israel Basketball Association decided, after the initial reports on alleged gambling on basketball games was revealed on IDF Radio several months ago, that players asked by police or private firms to take a polygraph test would be required to do so. (Tim)

ing, it should be used for Arab housing. Faisal Hussein said Palestinians would demonstrate at the site and try to prevent the constructions, as they did at Givat Hadagan near Efrat.

The future of a major section of the land slated for the construction is currently being discussed in the High Court of Justice, after several petitions were filed against the proposed construction. (Tim)

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